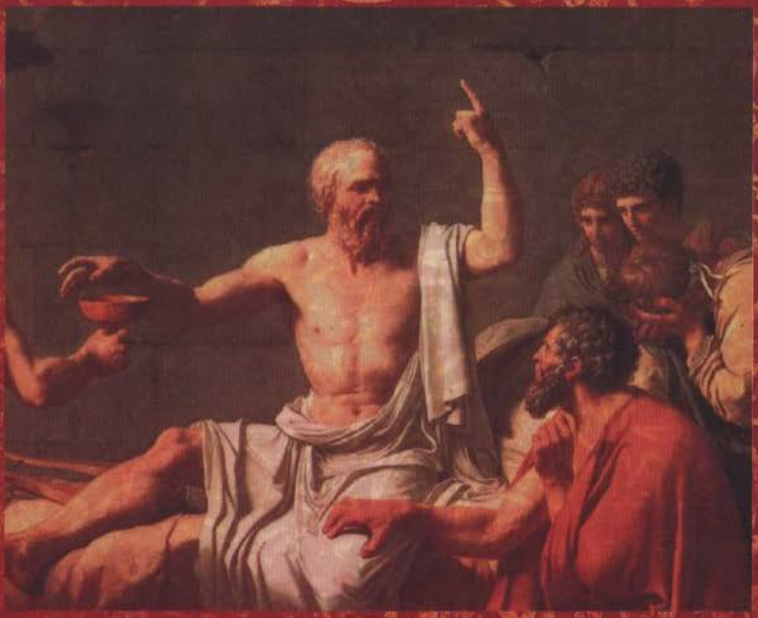
VALUE-ORIENTED EDUCATION SERIES

SOCRATES



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Socrates

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Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

Socrates

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Uday - Gopi

Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

Preface

The task of preparing teaching-learning material for value-oriented education is enormous. There is, first, the idea that value-oriented education should be exploratory rather than prescriptive, and that the teaching-learning material should provide to the learners a growing experience of exploration.

Secondly, it is rightly contended that the proper inspiration to turn to value-orientation is provided by biographies, autobiographical accounts, personal anecdotes, epistles, short poems, stories of humour, stories of human interest, brief passages filled with pregnant meanings, reflective short essays written in well-chiselled language, plays, powerful accounts of historical events, statements of personal experiences of values in actual situations of life, and similar other statements of scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary expression.

Thirdly, we may take into account the contemporary fact that the entire world is moving rapidly towards the synthesis of the East and the West, and in that context, it seems obvious that our teaching-learning material should foster the gradual familiarisation of students with global themes of universal significance as also those that underline the importance of diversity in unity. This implies that the material should bring the students nearer to their cultural heritage, but also to the highest that is available in the cultural experiences of the world at large.

Fourthly, an attempt should be made to select from Indian and world history such examples that could illustrate the theme

of the upward progress of humankind. The selected research material could be multi-sided, and it should be presented in such a way that teachers can make use of it in the manner and in the context that they need in specific situations that might obtain or that can be created in respect of the students.

The research teams at the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) have attempted the creation of the relevant teaching-learning material, and they have decided to present the same in the form of monographs.

It appears that there are three major powers that uplift life to higher and higher normative levels, and the value of these powers, if well illustrated, could be effectively conveyed to the learners for their upliftment. These powers are those of illumination, heroism and harmony.

It may be useful to explore the meanings of these terms – illumination, heroism and harmony – since the aim of these monographs is to provide material for a study of what is sought to be conveyed through these three terms. We offer here exploratory statements in regard to these three terms.

Illumination is that ignition of inner light in which meaning and value of substance and life-movement are seized, understood, comprehended, held, and possessed, stimulating and inspiring guided action and application and creativity culminating in joy, delight, even ecstasy. The width, depth and height of the light and vision determine the degrees of illumination, and when they reach the splendour and glory of synthesis and harmony, illumination ripens into wisdom. Wisdom, too, has varying degrees that can uncover powers of knowledge and action, which reveal unsuspected secrets and unimagined skills of art and craft of creativity and effectiveness.

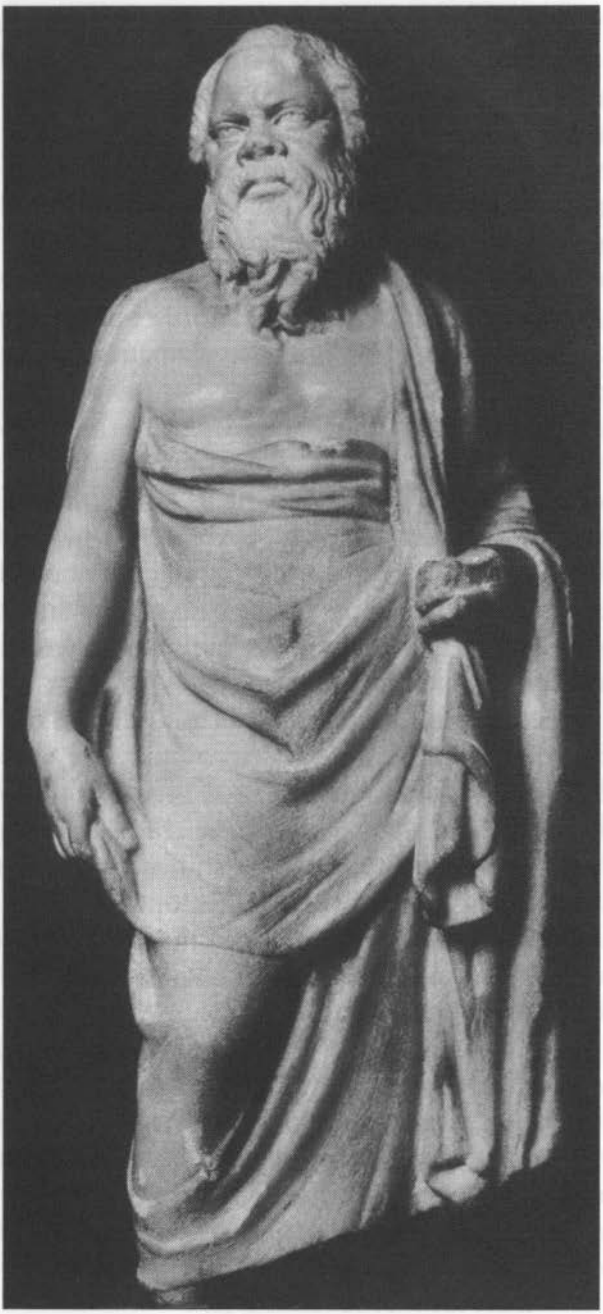
Heroism is, essentially, inspired force and self-giving and sacrifice in the operations of will that is applied to the quest, realisation and triumph of meaning and value against the resistance of limitations and obstacles by means of courage, battle and adventure. There are degrees and heights of heroism determined by the intensity, persistence and vastness of sacrifice.

Heroism attains the highest states of greatness and refinement when it is guided by the highest wisdom and inspired by the sense of service to the ends of justice and harmony, as well as when tasks are executed with consummate skill.

Harmony is a progressive state and action of synthesis and equilibrium generated by the creative force of joy and beauty and delight that combines and unites knowledge and peace and stability with will and action and growth and development. Without harmony, there is no perfection, even though there could be maximisation of one or more elements of our nature. When illumination and heroism join and engender relations of mutuality and unity, each is perfected by the other and creativity is endless.

Socrates stands in the Western world as an inspiring figure of a quest that wants to examine life, even at the peril of death. For Socrates, death is only a passage in the immortal life of a soul, a passage to the company of the great seers and sages, of the great heroic souls who live immortally in the world of universality and to converse with whom is indescribable joy. Socrates is a seeker and a teacher; he is a kindler and an awakener, a lover of illumination and a heroic fighter who is prepared to die rather than succumb to a life in which quest is denied. When we read *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*, we receive an immortal image of a Teacher who shines by inherent light and whose rays of light shed their luster on the entire history of Western Thought, and indeed on the entire history of World-Thought. It is to Plato that we owe so much for leaving to humanity a living testimony of the one who knew how to live, why to live and even how to die, so that knowledge may triumph, heroism may always remain triumphant.

This monograph is an attempt to give to young seekers of the world a glimpse of that rare sage of illumination and that hero of Truth as also the inspirer of Platonic Utopia in which knowledge can stand as a ruler and in which justice can be truly attained in perfect harmony.



Socrates

Introduction

Who was Socrates?

A stout man with a flat face, broad nose, thick lips, heavy beard, shabby clothes and an unduly large paunch, which he hoped to reduce by dancing – this is how Socrates has been described. Not a very flattering description of a man commonly considered the founder of Western philosophy. Although far from the Greek ideal of beauty, his face shows the honesty, courage and humour which has come to be called "Socratic". Plato speaks of him as all glorious within[1] while Alcibiades, another disciple of Socrates, compares him to a statue of Selinus[2] – ugly on the outside but full of beautiful golden statues of the gods inside.[3]

Socrates and his Times

Every great mind is to a great extent the product of his Age and environment he breathes in, for he is influenced by the ideas, manners, and social and political conditions prevalent at that time. And in return, one can say that that greatness leaves something of itself as a cumulation to that civilization that nurtured him, making it that much greater. But there are greatnesses that make a distinct difference, more than just a fractional addition in the chronology of events, who step out of the shadow of time as landmarks which herald a major change in the history of mankind. To understand Socrates better, it would be useful to

dwell on the historical atmosphere that existed at the time of his life. In the words of Shelley, "The period which intervened between the birth of Pericles and the death of Aristotle[4] is undoubtedly, whether considered in itself or with reference to the effect which it produced upon the subsequent destinies of civilized man, the most memorable in the history of the world."

After the defeat of the Persians[5] in 479 B.C., Athens dominated this period because she had won the allegiance of the other city-states by her leadership in saving Greece during the Persian invasions, which had threatened to destroy their civilization. To protect themselves against future Persian invasions, they formed the Delian Confederacy under Athenian leadership. While the other city-states contributed money towards its funds, Athens contributed ships, which led to its control over the other city-states, and the confederacy eventually transformed into an Athenian empire. This marked in single ink the preliminary sketches of the destiny of Athens prepared by Fate and brought forward by the predecessors of Pericles; it was left to him to fill in the colours, which would announce it for posterity as the Golden Age or the Age of Pericles.

Pericles

Under the leadership of Pericles, commander-in-chief of Athens, elected and re-elected for almost 30 years by the Athenians, the polis (city) of Athens reached the zenith of its political power and cultural achievements, and every aspect of the collective life prospered and developed. In his childhood and youth, he received music lessons from Damon,[6] the most famous music teacher of his time, he learnt literature from Pythocleides, he absorbed philosophy through the lectures of Zeno,[7] and he had Anaxagoras[8] for a friend and teacher who uplifted his mind to loftier purposes. From him Pericles learnt the art of eloquence and found within himself a calmness, which could not be shaken even in the most trying circumstance. It is said that Pericles, too caught up in the

Pericles
"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

affairs of state to keep in touch with his mentor, on hearing that Anaxagoras was struggling with old age and starvation, hastened to make amends and with great humility heard him as he chided, "those who have occasion for the lamp supply it with oil."

Pericles was driven by a superhuman zeal to ensure the development of Athens in all fields that make a civilization great – economic, military, literary, artistic, and philosophical, and he set about in a resolute manner to accomplish his objective, successively in each and every wake of Athenian life. A man of few words, he spoke with economy but gained the admiration of enlightened minds.

Athens not only enjoyed the privileges of democracy but also the order and taste that came under the moderate leadership of his

aristocratic dictatorship. He made reforms in the judiciary and began the practice of payment for jury as well as military service. He believed that the Olympic games and plays should not remain the luxury of the rich but even the lower echelons should have the privilege of enjoying them. To make that possible, he persuaded the state to make remuneration of two obols annually to each citizen. As a point of reference, it should be noted that Plato,[9] Aristotle and Plutarch,[10] all disapproved of these payments as, according to them, it injured the Athenian character.

He then turned towards the fortification of Athens and consequently persuaded the Assembly to supply funds for the construction of eight miles of long walls around Athens. Having secured Athens, he then turned his attention towards the beautification of the polis. He desired to transform Athens as the cultural capital of the region and to fulfill this dream he prepared a blueprint of a magnitude that would uplift the spirit of every Athenian. Pheidias,[11] Ictinus and Mnesicles, the best sculptors, were engaged for the fruition of this architectural programme. The Acropolis[12] was crowned with the Parthenon within which stood the marvelous statue of Athena, executed in ivory and gold by Pheidias, and the Erectheum,[13] created also by Pheidias, with its colossal statue in bronze of Athena Polias, the defender of her favourite city, along with altars devoted to Poseidon, god of the sea, and Hephaestus, god of fire, and there was also the wondrous Propylaea[14] or assemblage of entrance gates that gave access to the whole. Athens witnessed the outpouring of artistic genius visible even now in the ruins of the Parthenon but also put to work the multitude of unemployed in the city bringing prosperity to the citizens at large. Parallel to the work of rebuilding of the ancient shrines and other magnificent edifices, Pericles desired to build the spiritual blocks of the soul and mind and to that end, lent his patronage to philosophy and literature as well. It was the Age that manifested in the highest degree, beauty, grace, self-contained dignity and grandeur, which we associate with the highest genius. Cultural events such as public performances of the great plays of Aeschylus,[15] Sophocles[16] and Euripides[17] formed part of the developing

GREECE 362 BC

urban lifestyle. All citizens, rich or poor, could enjoy these events together in an atmosphere of critical appreciation. The political and social organization of the Greek city-states is regarded as an important step in the evolution of mankind's collective organization, for it was an attempt to realize freedom and equality for the individual. Although the rights of free expression and political participation were confined to Greek citizens, and although they were not extended to the slave labour imported from foreign "barbaric" countries, the polis embodied the ideal of the dignity and independence of the human being. Politics was considered an important common concern, and participation in the daily decision-making process was the right and duty of each citizen. Athens grew into one of the largest cities of the ancient world, bursting the limits of the traditionally small city-state and establishing an empire. This, then, was the atmosphere in which Socrates took his first breath.

Athens produced during that Golden Age great men in all walks of life – Socrates, the founder of Greek philosophy, Pheidias, Myron, and Polycletus, the sculptors, Zeuxis and Parrhasius, the painters, Pericles, the great orator and statesman, Herodotus and Thucydides, the historians, and Euripides and Sophocles, the tragedians.

This empire, however, did not last long; a conflict with the Greek city-state of Sparta, Athens' rival throughout Greek history, grew into the long Peloponnesian War[18] *(431-404 BC) in which Athens was ultimately defeated. Thus, Socrates knew both the splendour of the Periclean age and the chaos of war – a war which brought not only material hardship but, even more crucial for Socrates, a confusion in the sciences and an erosion of moral values.*

Life of Socrates

According to the accounts of Plato and Xenophon,[19] *the first forty years of the life of Socrates were nurtured by the rich cultural atmosphere of Athens. Born in 469 BC in Athens, he followed*

the trade of his father, a sculptor. It is said that the statues of Hermes and the three Graces, which stood at the entrance to the Acropolis had been carved by him. His mother was a midwife. He believed in training the body to keep fit and he is said to have usually been in good physical condition. He also participated in the Olympic games. He was trained in the usual branches of a Greek education, – gymnastics, reading, writing, knowledge of arithmetic and geometry, also the committal to memory and power of recitation of the poems of Homer. It is said that not only did Socrates exist at the same time as Parmenides,[20] Protagoras,[21] Gorgias, Hippias,[27] Prodicus,[23] and Thracymachus[24] in Greece but that there are accounts by Plato of his meetings with them. He is said to have enjoyed the company of many distinguished men of his times; Archelaus,[25] a pupil of Anaxagoras, who was for sometime his teacher, was probably responsible for turning Socrates from science to ethics, and Zeno's method of dialectic so impressed him that he adopted it as well. He married Xanthippe with whom he had three sons and held public office for a short time. He distinguished himself during the Peloponnesian War by his endurance and courage, serving as a foot soldier. He saved the life of a young man, Alcibiades, who for a brief time was his student, and renounced in his favour the award for courage in battle. It is said that in one of the battles with Sparta, he was the last of the Athenians to retreat and that he saved himself by glaring at the enemy. He had a remarkable endurance against hunger, cold and fatigue.

It was around the time when he was about forty years of age when it is said that he became conscious of his special mission; a message from God, delivered to him by a spirit whom he constantly consulted to guide him, commanded him to devote himself to the task of discovering True Knowledge. This was the starting point of the philosophy of Socrates, a time when he came into his own, discovered the building blocks of his own style of philosophy, the birth of the dialogue, a means to discover knowledge of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, a step that marked a concrete shift from the world of mysticism into the world of the intellect. The

next period of 25-30 years of his life, till his death in 399 BC, was spent devoted to the task of relentlessly pursuing knowledge and perfection, both in himself and others, through questioning and logic and dialogue, – a period that found him making foundational contributions to the world of Western philosophy.

It is rightly said that the individual becomes perfect when he becomes universal, but the universal manifests its own perfection when the individual brings into him something from the transcendental and adds it to the universal manifestation. Socrates was that individual who had brought something from the transcendental and fused it into the vastness of the Greek culture and enlarged the scope of the manifestation of the Greek culture. He had brought the normative ideal of virtue derived from knowledge and infused it into the growing tide of rational thought. That man of normative pursuits of virtue and clarity of pure reason imparted that special glow to Greek culture, which made it so distinctive in the history of the world.

Having discovered his divine mission, most of his time was spent in the public places of Athens – in the streets, the marketplace and the gymnasium[26] *– engaging his fellow citizens in conversation on subjects ranging from reflections on nature to enquiries into politics; but he never set himself up as a teacher. He had no liking for the country, and seldom passed the gates of the city.* "Fields and trees," *Plato makes him say,* "will not teach me anything; the life of the streets will." *He went about his daily task of prodding men with questions about virtues, demanding answers. In fact he became a terror to all those who could not think clearly. He likened himself to a 'gadfly'*[27] *who made it his business to find out who was really wise and who were just pretending to be wise. A number of these conversations were recorded by Plato who, after Socrates' death, founded the "Academy", the famous school of Athens, which lasted nearly eight hundred years.*

Obviously, provocations of Socrates could not remain free from criticism. His opponents complained that he was busy demolishing arguments given by others and rarely built any to

replace them. He often avoided answering a direct question by replying with another question as happened with Critias,[28] *a student. Hippias, it is said, raged at Socrates and refused to speak another word till Socrates defined justice himself! To this exasperated outcry, Socrates' calm response was that he was, like his mother, but a midwife who helps in delivering; to give birth to ideas was not a privilege given him by the gods.*

In many ways he was like the Sophists,[29] *and the Athenians referred to him as one too, though he begged to differ. And differ he did. Although like the Sophists he was well versed in the art of argumentation, could give analogies and change the course of a dialogue, and had a way with words, on four accounts he differed from them; – he abhorred rhetoric, he aspired to strengthen the moral fibre in men, he desired nothing more than to teach men the art of self-examination, and he refused any payment for his services as instructor.*

Despite all the criticism, there were those who loved him deeply. This Age produced not only men of genius in every walk of life but also those who nurtured them and stimulated them with their intelligent and sympathetic appreciation. As he said to one of his students:

> Perhaps I may be able to assist you in the pursuit of honour and virtue, from being mutually disposed to love; for whenever I conceive a liking for persons I devote myself with ardour, and with my whole mind, to love them, and be loved by them in return, regretting their absence and having mine regretted by them, and longing for their society while they long for mine.[30]

His pupils differed widely; there was no common doctrine that united them. Consequently, we see the most diverse schools of philosophical thought cropping up under their leadership – Cynicism[31] *propounded by Antisthenes,*[32] *which adopted the simplistic way of life of Socrates; Cyrenaic School by Aristip-*

pus,[33] *Epicureanism by Epicurus,*[34] *a school which developed from the Cyrenaic school; Stoicism,*[35] *as improving the individual's spiritual well-being through self-control, fortitude and detachment; and finally Platonism,*[36] *the founder of which was so influenced by his teacher that their lofty thoughts are united for eternity. There were others, like Phaedo,*[37] *a slave, who had been transformed into a philosopher by Socrates, Eucleides of Megara,*[38] *who was so impressed by the teachings of Socrates that he risked his life to sneak into Athens to receive instructions from his teacher when a law forbid all Megarians from entering Athens, the wealthy Crito, who took it upon himself to ensure that his friend would never be in want of anything; Critias, the oligarchic leader, an erstwhile student, whose association became one of the causes for the incrimination of Socrates that eventually led to his death sentence, and the son of Anytus,*[39] *who preferred to listen to the discourses of Socrates than apply his mind to the leather business his father wanted him to look after. And then there was Alcibiades, the Adonis of Athens, whose affections for his teacher made him cry out in wild abandon:*

> When we hear any other speaker, even a very good one, his words produce absolutely no effect upon us in comparison, whereas the very fragment of your words, Socrates, even at second hand, and however imperfectly reported, amaze and possess the souls of every man, woman and child who comes within hearing of them.... I am conscious that if I did not shut my ears against him and fly from the voice of the siren, he would detain me until I grew old sitting at his feet..... I have known in my soul, or in my heart.... That greatest of pangs, more violent in ingenious youth than any serpent's tooth, the pang of philosophy.....[40]

Socrates speaks of himself as a seeker of truth or a lover of wisdom – a philosopher. As a result of this reluctance to use his

talents for material gains, he lived a life so poor that the Sophist Antiphon could mock: "A slave who was made to live like that would run away." *Through the four seasons, his coat was the same and he preferred going around the city barefoot. Once during his visit to the marketplace he remarked,* "How many things there are that I do not want!"[41] *But his simple lifestyle was not the outcome of self-torment or asceticism; it originated in his attitude of complete indifference towards physical enjoyments. He was an example of self-control and moderation. He was not a loner; in fact he liked good company and sometimes allowed the wealthy to entertain him. But he was not a slave to them for their favours; he could very well do without them as well. As he says in his discussion with Antiphon, as recorded in the 'Memorabilia' by Xenophon,* "You, Antiphon, seem to think that happiness consists in luxury and extravagance, but I think that to want nothing is to resemble the Gods, and that to want as little as possible is to make the nearest approach to the Gods; that the Divine nature is perfection and that to be nearest to the Divine nature is to be nearest to perfection."

Socratic Theme of Quest

*Socrates taught that the great problem of any human being lies in the question of how to live his life. Endowed with rationality, each man must decide what course his life shall take. Although mankind's common aim is a "good life" (*eu-zen*), there is no common agreement on what a "good life" is, or how to reach it. Socrates' answer to this question lies in the Greek term* arête, *which is usually translated as virtue, but more precisely means the full perfection of man's innate qualities. Socrates' concept of the excellent and perfect human life is an* **integral** *one, encompassing the development of all physical, vital and intellectual potentialities. Pursuing this aim in his own life, Socrates fought in war and participated in the Olympic games, but his primary concern was the intellect, which he considered the noblest part of man's nature.*

In the history of thought, the word integrality has been

understood in several ways. Basically, integrality would mean the total synthesis of all the parts of the being. In the fullness of integrality, the highest spiritual consciousness manifests itself fully on all the planes of the being, including the mental, the vital and the physical. However, there are subordinate meanings of integral aims, and these aims, even while integrating all the parts of the being, may not find it possible to manifest the highest consciousness in all parts of the being. For example, the Vedic Rishis[42] *attempted the manifestation of the highest Supramental Consciousness in the body, and although they succeeded in widening and universalizing body consciousness, they came to the conclusion that one cannot enter into the Supramental consciousness fully in the physical body. There is also a mention in the Upanishads*[43] *that if one enters into the Supramental Consciousness fully, one cannot return from there into the bodily life.*

In the case of Socrates, we find that he advocated full life of the intellectual and spiritual consciousness in the mind, life and body. He also maintained that since the soul is planted in the body by the Divine Providence, the body should not be discarded. At the same time, he insisted that one should not crave to continue to live in the body, when by natural means or natural circumstances, the bodily life comes to an end. In this regard Socrates was following the Orphic[44] *view of life. Socrates maintained that in the ultimate analysis, bodily consciousness imposed on the soul the limitations of cravings of senses and hampered the fullness of the life of the soul and reason. According to him, therefore, one should, while in the body, endeavour to reduce the claims and demands of the bodily senses and strive to live more and more in the rational part of the soul, which alone can perceive and know the Ideas of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. The highest abode of the soul, where the soul discovers and lives in immortality, is the abode of the Supreme Good; there bodily existence has no place and the bodily existence is seen to be a mere shadow or appearance.*

There has, of course, been a long debate in the history of thought, both Eastern and Western, as to what is reality and what is appearance, and the debate is still continuing up to the present

day. The seeker has to make a serious study of this debate and explore the various alternative aims of life, some of which are very well known. The latest view has been expounded by Sri Aurobindo,[45] *who has, on the basis of the highest yogic realizations, shown that the Supramental Divine Consciousness can manifest in the physical existence.*

Arguments in Phaedo

In the light of this latest view, the arguments that we find in the Phaedo regarding the place of the life of the body in an ideal state of existence can be questioned. Nonetheless, what is valuable in the Phaedo is the exposition of the present limitations of the bodily existence, and these limitations are too obvious to be questioned. Even when the highest consciousness is proposed to be reconciled with the bodily existence, there is a full acknowledgement of the limitations of the physical life as it is lived under the conditions of the present organisation of consciousness. What is proposed, therefore, is that the bodily life should undergo a great perfection and even an evolutionary mutation so that the material life of the body becomes fully transformed. Divine life in a divine body is thus proposed as the aim of the highest integral view of life.

In the light of this aim and realisation, Socrates' views on the body, life and soul may seem to be constricted within limitations, but the value of the Socratic view lies in the fact that he endeavoured to explain as far as his own capacities and his cultural background could permit him. Judged in this way, Socrates' views do require radical revisitation and enlargement in the light of what has been achieved by human civilization today, but the contributions that he had made in those early times need to be acknowledged with due appreciation.

Influence of Socrates on Western Philosophy

The history of philosophy speaks of pre- and post- Socratic thinkers, illustrating Socrates' impact on the course of Western

philosophy and science. Prior to Socrates, the intuitive visions of the Orphic mysteries had a decisive influence on Greek thought. Socrates and his followers, Plato and Aristotle, established a rational and intellectual approach towards life, an approach, which extensively influenced the course of Western history. Their reflections on man's intellectual abilities led to the notion of the independent soul bestowed with cognitive powers through which man could achieve excellence and perfection. Socrates regarded the right use of the intellect as a great help to enlighten man in his search for the highest good in life. According to Socrates, knowledge is an indispensable part of the excellent and perfect life because doing good requires knowing what is good: "Man has only one thing to consider in performing any action – that is whether he is acting rightly or wrongly, like a good man or like a bad man."[46] *For Socrates, knowing the good necessarily implies doing it; otherwise man would consciously be choosing misery over known happiness. Knowledge and wisdom, he says, are virtues of the soul, which pursues the perfect and excellent life. By relentlessly seeking wisdom and knowledge or, as he puts it, by* "practicing philosophy and exhorting and elucidating the truth,"[47] *Socrates developed a method for discriminating between mere opinion (*doxa*) and knowledge (*episteme*). This method became known as "dialectic". In this question and answer type of discussion, opposed opinions are reduced to essential statements in order to reveal unclear assumptions, unexpected implications and fallacious inferences. The intellectual truth thus revealed, says Socrates, is only a very imperfect image of the Truth, which is the Divine's; compared to God's, man's knowledge is mere ignorance. When the oracle of Apollo and Delphi*[48] *called Socrates the wisest of living men, Socrates set out to disprove that statement, convinced that he really knew nothing. In the end, Socrates discovered that his so-called "wisdom" lay in the simple fact that he was conscious of his own ignorance: to know that you do not know is the first step towards knowing yourself.*

Trial of Socrates: Apology

When, at the age of seventy, Socrates was tried in the court of Athens for heresy and corruption of the youth, it seems evident that these charges were linked to his constant criticism of any authoritarian claim to knowledge. His defence, the Apology, *is one of the three texts by Plato portraying Socrates in his last days. The dialogues* Crito *and* Phaedo *show Socrates facing death. The* Apology *shows Socrates in court. He rejects the accusations of the prosecution; then, he goes on to give an account of his life, revealing the divine mission he has followed, and explaining the methods he has used in fulfilling his quest. He is accused of taking fees, influencing and corrupting the youth, inquiring into things* "below earth and above heaven", *and of believing in gods of his own. Socrates defends himself, saying that these accusations are attempts of the ignorants to suppress diverse opinions and prevent free discussion in science, art and politics.*

In his life-long search for wisdom, Socrates had always exposed those who, without knowledge, claimed to have found the truth; in his eyes, ignorance disguised as knowledge is mere arrogance and the epitome of falsehood. Even when it became evident that he would be sentenced to death, he did not surrender to his accusers. As Socrates said, such an act, although it might have saved his life, would have destroyed his soul, for it would have meant surrendering wisdom to ignorance. For Socrates, who claimed to be "subject to a divine or supernatural experience",[49] *the real difficulty* "is not so much to escape death but to escape from doing wrong."[50] *For all we know, he says, death may be a blessing; therefore how foolish to fear it more than we fear those evils which we know to be evils;* "To be afraid of death is just another form of thinking one is wise when one is not."[51]

As expected, his accusers, who would have been satisfied with nothing less than Socrates' complete surrender, were not convinced by his defence and sentenced him to death. But Socrates' equanimous acceptance of the verdict increased his fame as a wise man; and he has come to be regarded as the perfect example

of the truly philosophical life.

Arguments in Crito

The Crito *is a short dialogue between Crito, a wealthy friend, and Socrates, which takes place in prison after the court has sentenced him to death by hemlock poisoning. Crito has come to convince him to escape from prison with various arguments in defence of his suggestion. He tries to convince Socrates from various points of view, – public perception of Crito as a friend who did not help Socrates in his hour of need, and Socrates' obligation to impart to his own children an upbringing and education befitting that of himself. And lastly, Crito argued that Socrates would be behaving like a coward if he succumbed to the unjust verdict of the court. It is a conversation between them regarding justice, injustice, and the appropriate response to injustice.*

According to Socrates, the public has neither an unlimited capacity of doing harm nor an unlimited capacity of doing good, since the majority of people are ignorant and, therefore, the only opinion that is worthy of being considered should be that of one who is wise and good.

As far as his role as a parent was concerned, he argued that were he to escape he would have to flee to another state and it would not be fair to his children to be raised in foreign lands. And were his children to stay in Athens while he lived in exile, his friends would raise them; then if they were his true friends, would they not raise them the same if he were dead?

The most important counter-argument given by Socrates comes at the very end – Socrates thinks that injustice may not be answered with injustice, and refuses Crito's offer to finance his escape from prison because, as he argues, it is more important to live justly than merely to live. According to Socrates, the State is more important than an individual and likens the relationship between a citizen and his country to being higher than that of a parent and a child. In his view, having been nurtured in Athens and having raised his children in Athens, and by accepting

citizenship of Athens, knowing fully the laws of Athens, he has given his consent to obeying the laws of Athens as well. He says that just as a child should respect the decision of a parent, even though he thinks that the parent is wrong in his judgment, so should an individual respect the verdict of the state even though he thinks that it is unjust. Were he to disobey the verdict, he would be unjust, as he would be reneging from an agreement he made with the state. The laws of the state are necessary for the society and "he who is a corrupter of the laws is more than likely to be corrupter of the young and foolish portion of mankind." *Finally, having disobeyed the laws, would he be able to uphold in public his own views that virtue, justice, institutions and laws are* "the best thing among men"?

This argument of Socrates, that the needs of the individual are subordinate to those of the state brings to mind the character and actions of one of the most celebrated personalities of Indian history, namely, Sri Rama;[52] *in particular, the decision he took to exile his beloved wife, Sita. From his personal point of view, Sita did not deserve to be exiled; as Socrates did not believe that he deserved to be punished; and yet both bowed before the demands of state or society, which is normally subject to public perception.*

There was a time in the history of the world when there was a great need to subordinate the individual to the collectivity or to the state. This attitude has been challenged by the modern theory of individualism, according to which, the fulfillment of the individual is more important than the needs of the society or the collectivity. According to this view, the individual ought to act according to the injunction of the law of the Right, which may be opposed to the social or state law. Therefore, the individual should disregard the social or state law, even if it means a revolt against the collectivity, and follow the dictate of the law of the Right which may be directly received by the individual through his own developed moral or spiritual sense. This is the reason why individualists are often in collision with the authority of the state.

In fact, there is a Higher Will, which, favours neither the society nor the individual, and points to the source of Ideal action,

which lies in the Universal and Transcendental Self. According to that view, an individual does not owe allegiance either to himself or to the society or to the state, but to the Universal and Transcendental Self, and the individual should obey the imperatives delivered by that Self.

In judging historical events and actions of exemplary individuals, we should not be guided by the views which are currently accepted in the contemporary times, but weigh the uppermost concerns of a given Age and arrive at a truly balanced judgment or verdict. And so, in judging Socrates or Sri Rama, we should keep in mind the context of the historical importance of the society or the state in preference to the individual, which existed during their lives, and refrain from imposing arguments that have developed in later times in history, which may have their own historical value.

Arguments in the Phaedo

In the Phaedo, *we find an account of the last moments in the life of Socrates, his conversation with his friends prior to his drinking hemlock and after, until he loses consciousness. The dialogue is told from the perspective of one of Socrates' students, Phaedo of Elis. Having been present at Socrates' death bed, Phaedo relates the dialogue to Echecrates, a Pythagorean philosopher from the ancient Greek town of Phlius.*

Here, we see how Socrates describes his ideas of forms and essences. There is absolute justice, absolute beauty and absolute good, but they are not visible to the eye. He also speaks of absolute greatness, and health and strength and of the essences and true nature of everything. Socrates begins by welcoming death for it separates the body from the soul and therefore frees it, so that, it may finally attain to Pure Knowledge. But, he did not believe in voluntarily snuffing out life, for he considered it unlawful. He defends his theory by arguing that the body is an impediment to the soul in its search for Pure Knowledge with its incessant demands and cravings. 'He wants to get rid of eyes and ears, and

with the light of the mind wants only to behold the light of truth.'[53] *Through a process of logical questioning, he concludes that in thought alone can a philosopher best pursue pure knowledge – by gathering the mind into itself and not allowing sound, sight, pain or pleasure to trouble it.*

Socrates believed in the Orphic view that the soul is immortal and that God has placed the soul of man in his body; but far from taking it only as an assumption, he goes on to argue the immortality of the soul in a very systematic manner.

He begins the argument by asking his friend Cebes[54] *about the theory that states that all things are generated out of their opposites – weaker from the stronger which turn weaker again, swifter from the slower and then go back to swifter. He goes on to argue that the dead are generated from the living and go back again to the dead. He further argues that without this cycle* "must not all things at last be swallowed up in death?"

Next, he sets out to prove the existence of the soul in the body and the immortality of the soul. Here, the kernel of the argument is his famous theory that True Knowledge is recollection, – the theory, which has been demonstrated in Plato's dialogue Meno[55]. *Through a series of questions he argues that all true knowledge is recollection, and since it is by recollection that we come to know Absolute Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Absolute Essence and the Equality of things, then this activity of recollection can be possible only because the soul has prior knowledge of these absolutes before taking on a new body. In a new body, it is found that these ideas are pre-existent, and this could not be possible unless the soul in a new birth, in the present body was immortal. He sums it up by concluding that the external world does play a role of stimulus to the awakening of our surface consciousness, and on comparing the knowledge by sense organs with the inherent knowledge pre-existent in our souls one discovers that the soul must have had a prior existence because ideas cannot pre-exist without the pre-existence of the soul.*

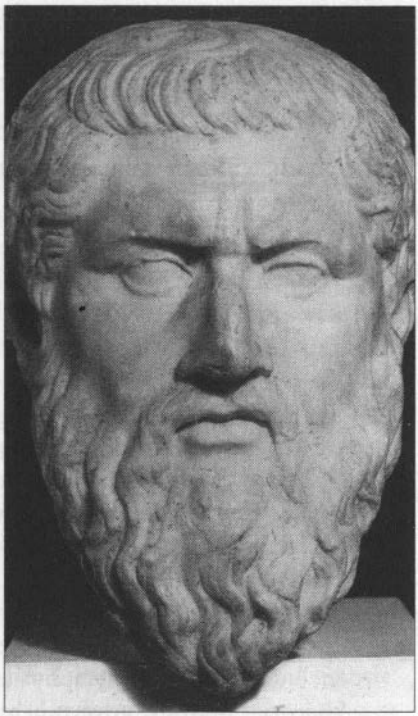
Socratic doctrine of knowledge as recollection and knowledge consisting of pure ideas of Absolutes may not seem too convincing.

The empiricists, in particular, delight in contradicting the Socratic arguments. For example, Bertrand Russell, in his book The History of Western Philosophy, *criticizes this theory of knowledge as recollection, by pointing out that even though the knowledge of logic and mathematics could perhaps be demonstrated as knowledge by recollection, the Socratic argument is wholly inapplicable to empirical knowledge.*

Russell is an empiricist and considers that all knowledge is derived from the experience of the senses, except the knowledge of logic and mathematics, which, in reality, he does not accept as knowledge. There is, according to Russell, no such thing as Absolute Equality, or Absolute Truth, Beauty or Goodness. He maintains that these so-called Absolutes are only fictions of the mind for the sake of convenience of speech and communication but not corresponding to any truths of reality. Unfortunately, Russell gives no arguments to prove his contentions. He simply appeals to sense-experience. But this appeal cannot be regarded as an argument. One can feel legitimately that Russell refuses to go beyond the world of senses and finite things and dismisses arbitrarily the rationalistic doctrine of Socrates which probes deeper into the psychology of rational thought in which one does find the presence of Universal Ideas such as those of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, etc.

The humour with which Socrates welcomes the moment when he will be served the poison speaks of the lofty heights to which his soul had ascended – he was detached and free from the mundane and worrisome demands and cravings of the body. The dispassionate manner in which he described the effect of the poison in his body presents to us a picture of a man who was completely without fear in the face of death.

Socrates' imperturbability in the face of death is attributed by some philosophers merely to his belief in the immortality of the soul and to his belief that true knowledge is attained only when the soul is free from the shackles of bodily bondage. But this belittling of Socrates ignores the fact that the normal experience or expectation of death produces involuntary reactions of shrinking and nervous anxiety, irrespective of one's psychological beliefs.



Plato

Whatever may be the fallacies in his beliefs or arguments regarding the necessity of death as a pre-requisite for the soul to attain to pure knowledge, the equanimity displayed by Socrates only proves the admirable fortitude of the character of Socrates who was able to overcome the involuntary bodily and psychological reactions to the expectation and process of death.

Just a few moments before he succumbs to death, he reminds his friend to offer a cock to Asclepius,[56] *the god of healing:* "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius, will you remember to pay the debt?" *With these last words, in a style typical of Socrates, full of humour even in the face of death, Socrates implies that he is grateful to Asclepius for healing him, for according to him, death is the cure for life! This is Virtue, this is Knowledge; this is Socrates!*

On his death, Xenophon described him as "so just that he

wronged no man in the most trifling affair.... so temperate that he never preferred pleasure to virtue; so wise that he never erred in distinguishing better from worse... so capable of discerning the character of others, and of exhorting them to virtue and honour, that he seemed to be such as the best and happiest of men would be."[57]

Notes and References

1. Plato, *The Seventh Letter.*
2. Silenus – In Greek mythology, Silenus was considered to be the tutor and faithful companion of the wine-god Dionysus. He was bald, and fat with thick lips and a squat nose, and had the legs of a human and when intoxicated was said to possess special knowledge and the powers of prophesy.
3. Plato, *Symposium*
4. Aristotle (384-322 BC), was a greek philosopher, a student of Plato and a teacher of Alexander the Great. He wrote on diverse subjects including physics, metaphysics, poetry, biology and zoology, logic, rhetoric, politics, government and ethics.Along with Socrates and Plato, he is considered to be one of the most influential of the ancient Greek philosophers.
5. The Persian king Darius was defeated at Marathon in 490 BC, and his son and successor Xerxes at Salamis in 480 BC.
6. Damon, son of Damonides, was an advisor to Pericles. Though his expertise was musicology, some say that he had a broader influence over Pericles' political policy; e.g. Damon is said to have been responsible for advising Pericles to incorporate the policy of paying for jury service.
7. Zeno of Elea (490-430 BC) was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher of Southern Italy. He was a member of the Eleatic School founded by Parmenides. He invented the Dialectic, adopted by Socrates.
8. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500-428 BC) was a pre-socratic Greek philosopher, member of the Ionian School of philosophy. Anaxagoras brought philosophy and the spirit of scientific inquiry from Ionia to Athens where he lived for about 30 years. His observations of the celestial bodies and the fall of meteorites led him to form new theories of the universal order. He attempted to give a scientific

account of eclipses, meteors, rainbows and the sun, which he described as a mass of blazing metal, larger than the Peloponnese. The heavenly bodies, he asserted, were masses of stone torn from the earth and ignited by rapid rotation. However, these theories brought him into collision with the popular faith; Anaxagoras' views on such things as heavenly bodies were considered dangerous.

In 450, he was accused of impiety and collaboration with Persia, and condemned to death (?), but escaped with the help of Pericles, who had been his student, and retired to Lampsacus, where he died. The details of the story are disputed, but there is little doubt that the motives underlying his accusation were not religious or patriotic but political, and formed part of a campaign against Pericles and his advisers.

9. Plato (428-348 BC), whose original name was Aristocles, was an ancient Greek philosopher, the second of the great trio of ancient Greeks – succeeding Socrates and preceding Aristotle – who between them laid the philosophical foundations of Western culture. Plato was also a mathematician, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of The Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world. It was one of the two famous schools in ancient Athens, the other being the Lyceum of Aristotle. The Platonic Academy was closed down by the Christian emperor Justinian in AD 529. Plato was a student of Socrates and has written numerous Socratic dialogues which are a proof of his brilliance as a writer and a philosopher. Some of them are: Euthypro, Apology, Phaedo, Crito, Meno, Symposium, Republic.

10. Plutarch (46-127 AD), Mestrius Plutarchus, was a Greek historian, biographer, essayist, and Middle Platonist. Plutarch was born to a prominent family. His literary works consist of the Parallel Lives and the Moralia.

11. Pheidias (480-430 BC), son of Charmides, was an ancient Greek sculptor, universally regarded as the greatest of all Classical sculptors. Along with the Athenian works commissioned by Pericles, he also sculpted the colossal statue of Zeus at Olympia in the 5th century BC.

12. Acropolis is the Greek term for the central place of a city containing the municipal and religious buildings, preferably located on a hill, as is the one in Athens, which has the Parthenon, a temple of the goddess Athena and the treasury and other buildings located on it. For purposes of defense, early settlers naturally chose elevated ground,

frequently a hill with precipitous sides, and these early citadels became in many parts of the world the nuclei of large cities which grew up on the surrounding lower ground.

13. Erectheum is an ancient Greek temple on the north side of the Acropolis of Athens, notable for a design that is both elegant and unusual. It was built between 421 and 407 BC. The temple was dedicated to Athena and Poseidon. It was called Erectheum because it was built either in the honour of the legendary king Erectheus, who is said to have been buried nearby or in the honour of a Greek legendary hero Ericthonius.

14. Propylaea is any monumental gateway based on the original Propylaea that serves as the entrance to the Acropolis in Athens. The word propylaea is the union of the prefix *pro* (before or in front of) plus the plural of the Greek *pylon* or *pylaion* (gate), meaning literally 'that which is before the gates', but the word has come to mean simply gate building.

15. Aeschylus (525-456 BC) was an ancient Greek playwright. He is often recognized as the father or the founder of tragedy, and is the earliest of the three Greek tragedians whose plays survive, the others being Sophocles and Euripides. He expanded the number of characters in plays to allow for conflict between them; previously, characters interacted only with the chorus. Unfortunately, only seven of the estimated 70 plays written by Aeschylus have survived into modern times. Many of Aeschylus' works were influenced by the Persian invasion of Greece, which took place during his lifetime. His play *The Persians* remains an important primary source of information about this period in Greek history. The war was so important to Greeks and to Aeschylus himself that, upon his death around 456 BC, his epitaph included a reference to his participation in the Greek victory at Marathon but not to his success as a playwright.

16. Sophocles (495-406 BC) was the second of three great ancient Greek tragedians. He wrote 123 or more plays during the course of his life. For almost 50 years, he was the dominant competitor in the dramatic competitions of ancient Athens that took place during the religious festivals. Only seven of his tragedies have survived into modern times with their text completely known. The most famous of these are the three tragedies concerning Oedipus and Antigone: these are often known as the Theban plays or The Oedipus Cycle. Sophocles influenced the development of the drama, most impor-

tantly by adding a third character and thereby reducing the importance of the chorus in the presentation of the plot. He also developed his characters to a greater extent than earlier playwrights such as Aeschylus, and used female characters in his plays.

17. Euripides (480-406 BC) was the last of the three great tragedians of classical Athens. Euripides is known primarily for having reshaped the formal structure of traditional Attic tragedy by showing strong women characters and intelligent slaves, and by satirizing many heroes of Greek mythology. His plays seem modern by comparison with those of his contemporaries, focusing on the inner lives and motives of his characters in a way previously unknown to Greek audiences. Perhaps one of his more famous quotes is "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad".

18. The Peloponnesian War, fought from 431 to 404 BC between the dominant city-state of Athens, master of an empire of allied states stretching across the Aegean Sea, and Sparta, which dominated its neighborhood through the Peloponnesian League. There were several causes for the war including the building of the Athenian long walls, Megara's defection and the envy felt by Sparta at the growth of the Athenian Empire.

Athens, the world's first democracy, though poor in natural resources, was the naval power of the ancient world, while Sparta had the best army. The war that would eventually lead to the downfall of both city-states, started as a regional conflict between the city of Corinth and one of its colonies. Athens and Sparta were drawn into the dispute reluctantly, but with the passage of time, were completely embroiled in it.

At the start, Pericles, the great Athenian commander, fought a war of attrition against the Spartans, hoping to wear them out. But in 430 BC, a plague broke out within the city walls, killing large numbers of citizens and destroying support for Pericles' tactics.

The two powers agreed to peace in 424 BC, but neither side held to the treaty. In 415 BC, hostilities started up again, this time over control of Greek colonies on the island of Sicily. In the following years, the destruction of the Athenian fleet, the revolt of many of Athens' allies, internal unrest, and the intervention of Persia on the side of the Spartans, slowly diminished Athens' power. In 405 BC, Sparta was able to cut off Athens supply lines. The city soon surrendered.

The victorious Spartans installed an oligarchy to rule over Athens, ushering in a bloody period of witch-hunts and political executions.

Although that government was overthrown a year later, Athenian democracy was critically diminished. And while Sparta enjoyed a period of dominance in the region, the war left it critically weakened as well.

The Peloponnesian War is a tragic story of virtue and ambition, of a society that developed theater, history, philosophy and architecture to unparalleled heights, and its collapse.

19. Xenophon (431-355 BC), an Athenian, was a soldier, mercenary and an admirer of Socrates. He is known for his writings on the history of his own times (*Anabasis, Hellenica,* etc.), the sayings of Socrates (*Memorabilia, Symposium, Apology*, etc.), and the life of Greece (on Horsemanship, Hunting with Dogs, etc.).

On being invited by Cyrus the younger, to fight against his elder brother, the emperor of Persia, Xenophon consulted Socrates whether he should go to Persia to fight for Cyrus or not. Socrates directed him to consult the Oracle at Delphi. Instead, Xenophon asked the Oracle as to which gods he should pray to and sacrifice to, in order to return successfully and safe from his voyage, and the oracle gave him the names. When he recounted to Socrates of his visit to the oracle, Socrates chastised him for asking the wrong question, but asked him to follow the advice of the oracle.

Xenophon and his comrades were successful in their battle, but Cyrus was killed and they found themselves deep in enemy territory, leaderless. The ten thousand, as the Greek army of mercenaries was called, elected Xenophon as one of their leaders, and finally they fought their way home. Xenophon's record of his entire expedition – the battle as well as the return journey homewards is called *Anabasis* – a text which was used by Alexander the Great as a field guide during his expeditions in Persia.

On his return, Xenophon was exiled from Athens because he fought under a Spartan king against Athens and also because of his association with Cyrus, a Persian. But it is said that he was later re-instated following the death of his son in battle fighting for Athens.

20. Parmenides of Elea (early 5th century BC) one of the most significant pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. He was a student of Ameinias. He founded the School of Elea and his students included Zeno of Elea and Melissus of Samos. His only known work is a poem called 'On Nature' of which only a fragment has survived.

According to him, our perception of the physical world is mistaken. Reality of the world is 'One Being'; – without a beginning or an end,

constant, eternal, undestroyable. He taught that the Real is different from the Apparent; – Reality is stastic, unchanging, that which is, and the phenomena of change and movement that one sees in the world was only an appearance of the same static eternal and unchanging reality.

Parmenides divided his teachings into two parts: the way of truth, and, the way of appearance. In the way of truth, he expounds: You cannot know what is not, and therefore you cannot speak of it. You can think of that which is. How can that, which is, come into being? If it came into being, then it is not, nor is it if it is going to be in the future. Thus the concept of becoming does not exist and the concept of extinguishing also does not arise.

21. Protagoras of Abdera (490-420 BC), though a contemporary of Socrates, was considered a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher. He was one of several fifth century Greek thinkers (including Gorgias, Hippias, and Prodicus) collectively known as the Older Sophists, a group of travelling teachers or intellectuals who were experts in rhetoric (the science of oratory) and related subjects. Protagoras is known primarily for two statements – 1) Man is the measure of all things, and 2) that one could not tell if the gods existed or not. He is considered to be the first proponent of the philosophical view, which is known today as relativism. Some claim that these statements led him to being tried for impiety in Athens and his books being burned. He could make the weaker argument appear the stronger since he believed that sometimes the truth lay hidden in the weaker argument. Protagoras' notion that judgments and knowledge are in some way relative to the person judging or knowing, has been very influential, and is still widely discussed in contemporary philosophy. In his dialogue Protagoras, Plato credits him with having invented the role of the professional sophist or professional educator, training ambitious young men for a public career.

22. Hippias of Elis, one among the several Greek thinkers called the older sophists, was born about the middle of the 5th century BC. He was a younger contemporary of Protagoras and Socrates.

23. Prodicus of Ceos (465-415 BC) was one among the several greek thinkers called the older sophists. He came to Athens as ambassador from Ceos, and became known as a speaker and a teacher. Like Protagoras, he professed to train his pupils for domestic and civic service; but it would appear that, while Protagoras's chief instruments of education were rhetoric and style, Prodicus made linguistics promi-

nent in his curriculum.

24. Thrasymachus (459-400 BC) was a sophist of ancient Greece best known as a character in Plato's Republic. His career appears to have been spent as a sophist, at Athens, though there is no concrete evidence that he was a sophist. He is credited with an increase in the rhythmic character of Greek oratory, also a greater appeal to the emotions through gesture.

25. Archelaus was an Athenian philosopher of the 5th century, student of Anaxagoras and teacher of Socrates for a brief period.

26. In ancient Greece, the "Gymnasium" was a public school for physical education for the adult male population. The state-owned "gymnasiums" were basically rectangular sports grounds, surrounded by colonnades containing washrooms, massage rooms and training rooms.

27. "Gadfly" is a type of fly, but it is a term which is often used for people who upset the existing state of affairs by posing provoking questions, or who attempt to stimulate a new process of thinking in people by proving an irritant. The term "gadfly" was used by Plato to describe Socrates' relationship, as an irritating fly, to the Athenian political lot, which he compared to a slow and dimwitted horse. The term has been used to describe many politicians and social commentators. During his defense in the Apology, Socrates pointed out that dissent, like the tiny gadfly, was easy to swat, but the cost to society of silencing individuals who were irritating could be very high. "If you kill a man like me, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me," because his role was that of a gadfly, "to sting people and whip them into a fury, all in the service of truth."

28. Critias (460-403 BC), born in Athens, was for a brief time a student of Socrates, a fact that did not endear Socrates to the Athenian public. Not liking the imposition of restraints by Socrates, both Critias and Alcibiades had abandoned their lessons with him. He was the leader of the Thirty Tyrants who came to rule Athens after its fall to the Spartans following the Peloponnesian war. He blacklisted many of its citizens, most of his prisoners were executed and their wealth was confiscated. He proved to be very violent; a tormented personality with many complexes and much hatred in contrast to the Platonic figure described as the student of Socrates.

29. Sophists were travelling lecturers, writers and teachers who offered training and instruction in return for fees. Through training in the art of speaking and arguing they prepared ambitious young noble-

men for a successful political career.

30. Xenophon, *Memorabilia.*

31. Cynicism was originally the philosophy of a group of ancient Greeks called the Cynics, founded by Antisthenes, who was inspired by the Socratic doctrine of knowledge is virtue. His students were Diogenes of Sinope, Crates of Thebes, and Zeno of Citium, who, inspired by the teachings of Socrates, was led to Crates of Thebes, who became his teacher, and later went on to develop the school of Stoics. All these men adhered steadfastly to the principles laid down by the Cynic School's founder, Antisthenes.

They believed that virtue was the only necessity for happiness, and that it was entirely sufficient for attaining happiness. The Cynics followed this philosophy to the extent of neglecting everything not furthering their perfection of virtue and attainment of happiness. Thus, they neglected society, personal hygiene, family obligations, pursuing money, etc., – to lead entirely virtuous, and, thus, happy lives.

After his enlightenment, it is said, Diogenes travelled throughout Greece, almost naked and without provisions; enjoying the sun, the warm weather, the beaches, and so gathered about him thousands of pilgrims who listened to his talks, pregnant with sarcastic remarks about society. Even Alexander the Great, en route to Asian campaigns once went to him. Diogenes advised him to renounce conquest; however, Alexander declined, with "resignation", believing his destiny already written.

32. Antisthenes (444-365 BC), an Athenian, was the founder of the Cynic school of philosophy. In his youth he was a student of Gorgias, Hippias and Prodicus. Later, he came under the influence of Socrates, and became a devoted pupil.

It is said that so eager was he to hear Socrates speak that he would walk daily from Piraeus to Athens, accompanied by his friends. Filled with enthusiasm for the Socratic idea of virtue, he founded a school of his own – the school of Cynics. He attracted the poorer masses by the simplicity of his life and teaching. He scorned the pride and pomp of the world. He wore a cloak with a staff and a bag, symbolising philosophy, – which also became the uniform of his followers. So ostentatious was this display that Socrates rebuked, "I see your pride looking out through the rent of your cloak, O Antisthenes."

33. Aristippus (435-366 BC) was one of the disciples of Socrates.

Impressed with Socrates' calm acceptance of pleasure as a good, he developed a school of thought – the Cyrenaic School of hedonism that advocated the ethic of pleasure which stated that for a good life, man should dedicate his life to the pursuance of pleasure and the avoidance of suffering or inflicting pain; but at the same time he must employ good judgment and exercise self-control to keep a check on powerful human desires – 'to possess and not be possessed.'

34. Epicurus (341-270 BC) was an ancient Greek philosopher, the founder of Epicureanism, a popular school of thought. His philosophy is a combination of atomic materialism which defines the world to be made up of irreducible atoms and ethical hedonism which advocates the pursuance of pleasure through moderation of desires. His teachings gave great importance to the sense-perception.

He stated that the universe is infinite and eternal, and the events in the world are based on the movement of atoms in empty space, and that both body and soul perish after death and that the gods, also made up of atoms, though of a finer quality, do not interfere in the life of man and, therefore, do not punish or reward humans. Epicurus is famous for his argument about the contradiction between the existence of evil and the existence of an omnipotent God which he expounds as follows:

If God wants to eradicate evil but cannot, then he would be weak (which is not true according to the conventional definition of God).

If God can eradicate evil but does not want to, then he would be cruel (which is not true according to the conventional definition of God).

If God neither wants to nor can eradicate evil, then he would be both cruel and weak (which is also not true according to the conventional definition of God).

If God wants to and can eradicate evil, then why does evil continue to exist in the world?

He, therefore, refutes the presence of an omnipotent God, but does not deny the existence of a number of gods, immortal and in bliss, living in between worlds in the universe, neutral to the lives of men.

He believed that the objective of philosophy is to arrive at a happy and tranquil life by the eradication of two things: fear of gods and death, and pain – both mental and physical. According to Epicurus, the yardsticks for good and bad were sensations of pleasure and pain, therefore the experience of pain was bad and the experience of

pleasure was good. He gave great importance to the presence of good friends for attaining a happy and tranquil life. However, he counselled restraint and moderation with respect to physical desires as unbridled desire and over-indulgence in pleasure could lead to dissatisfaction, ultimately to pain. According to him, man should aim at the absence of pain (both physical and mental) and a state of satiation and tranquility that was free from the fear of death and the retribution of the gods. In other words, when man is free from pain, he no longer desires pleasure, and when he is free from fear, he is tranquil and at peace.

According to him, it is not possible for man to live a pleasant life without being wise and just (to oneself and others). And likewise, it is not possible to be wise and just and not live a pleasant life.

35. Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium (333-264 BC) in Athens. His philosophy developed from the tenets of Cynicism founded by Antisthenes who was a student of Socrates. The basic teaching of this school was the attainment of freedom from anguish and grief by having clear judgement. This would help an individual improve his spiritual life and lead him towards truth which is virtuous. Reason was an important instrument for the stoics which they said should rule over passions, since passion distorts truth. They advocated self-control, endurance and detachment from distracting emotions. Stoics believed that by having a mastery over passion, it is possible to be free from the disharmony of the world and one would find peace within oneself.

36. Platonism is a term, which refers to the philosophy of Plato that expounds the existence of universals.

37. Phaedo of Elis (born at the end of 5th century BC) was a Greek philosopher who founded the Elian School. He was taken prisoner in the war between Elis and Sparta and brought to Athens as a slave where he eventually became a student of Socrates, who out of his affection for him had him freed. It is said that, since Plato named one of his dialogues after him, he must have been on friendly terms with him.

38. Eucleides of Megara (430-360 BC) was the founder of the Megarian or the Eristic School. He was influenced by the writings of Parmenides on the subject of disputation. On hearing about Socrates, he shifted to Athens and was under his tutelage for many years. Such was his sincerity that when a law was passed forbidding the entry of any Megarian into Athens, Eucleides would sneak in at

night into Athens to receive instructions.

His philosophy was a synthesis of the teachings of both Socrates and Parmenides. From Socrates he learned that virtue is knowledge, and from Parmenides he learned that there is only one Reality – The Being, while multiplicity, motion and sense perception (also called non-being) are illusory. Therefore, virtue is the knowledge of that Being – (call it God, Intelligence, The Good, the One Absolute Being) and becoming (call it the many, evil), is its opposite. Other virtues, such as kindness, benevolence, wisdom, and patience are different names for the one virtue, i.e. knowledge of that One Being. He was evasive about the existence of the pantheon of gods that the Greeks believed in at that time.

His fondness for disputation continued and he became involved in disputes in courts, which displeased Socrates who abhorred forensic competitions. This probably caused a rift between them, for after this, Eucleides founded the Megarian School, which taught students the art of disputation. Though he taught this art with great zest to the point of madness, nevertheless, he had not lost his softer side. There is an anecdote regarding a quarrel he had with his brother. Livid with Eucleides, his brother raged, "May I die, if I do not take revenge on you!" To which Eucleides replied, "And may I die if I do not manage to curb your indignation with endurance, and have you love me as you did before."

In court disputes, he disliked the analogical method of reasoning and believed that lawful argumentation should consist of unbiased inferences based on valid propositions.

39. Anytus was an honest and influential democrat who hated the Sophists and regarded Socrates as one of them. He also blames Socrates for influencing his son to rebel against him.
40. *Symposium* by Plato
41. 'Socrates' by Diogenes Laertius
42. Vedic Rishis were seekers of true knowledge, which they attained through the practice of Yoga, a science and art of psychological concentration and perfection. They described their aspirations and victories in the form of verses, which were expressions born out of their innermost vision and realization. The Vedas are a compilation of these verses, and other prose writings as well.
43. Upanishads are the books of knowledge that came after the Vedas, Brahmanas and the Aranyakas. They are also called the vedanta as they contain the essence of the knowledge contained in the Vedas.

The word Upanishad consists of three components: *upa* meaning near, *ni*, meaning closer and *shad* meaning dwell. Thus Upanishad means dwelling very closely to the secret knowledge.

44. Orphism was the belief in the transmigration of souls. According to it, man is bound to a wheel, which turns through endless cycles of birth and death. The central idea of Orphism seems to be the release of the soul from the wheel of birth. The soul's true life is in the heavens but it is bound to earth. In other words, man is an embodied soul – partly of earth and partly of heaven; by a pure life, the heavenly part is increased and the earthly part diminished. Orphics believed that the soul might achieve eternal bliss or suffer eternal or temporary torment according to its way of life here on earth and that man should aim at becoming pure so that through purification and renunciation he may, eventually, attain to the union with God.

45. Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was one of the greatest Indian Yogis of the modern times. He was a revolutionary, a philosopher, a poet and a visionary of evolution. He was an explorer of consciousness and the architect of a new world. "Man is a transitional being" and therefore a possibility of a Divine life on earth, not only in mind and life-force but also in the physical body, was a discovery he made through his intensive exploration of consciousness, a search to which he devoted his entire life. In 1914, The Mother (Mirra Alfassa) (1878-1973) met Sri Aurobindo, and collaborated with him in his work for bringing down the supramental consciousness on earth. And the mission of manifesting supramental consciousness in physical consciousness was accomplished. The accounts of their research are to be found in 'Record of Yoga' by Sri Aurobindo (2 volumes) and *Mother's Agenda* (13 volumes).

46. Plato, "The Apology of Socrates", *The Last Days of Socrates* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 59.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 61

48. Oracle of Apollo at Delphi: divinely inspired utterances given at Delphi, the temple of Apollo, the most widely revered of the Greeks Gods.

49. Plato, "The Apology of Socrates", *The Last Days of Socrates* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 63.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 60

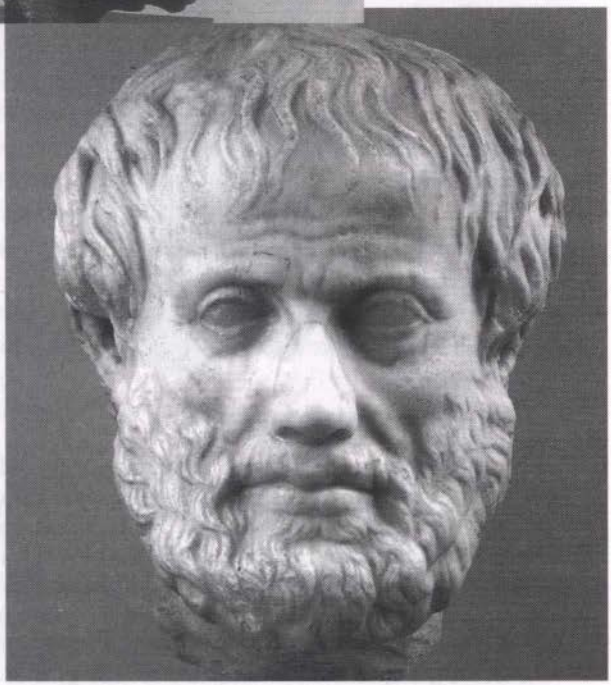
52. Sri Rama, ancient King of Ayodhya, beloved hero and victor, whose exemplary virtues and life have been recounted most admirably in

Valmiki's Ramayana, one of the greatest epics of India, which along with another equally great epic, Mahabharata, has determined the value-system of Indian culture. His exile, ordained by his father under compulsion, his renunciation of his right to Ayodhya's throne, his love for his wife, Sita, who chose to accompany Sri Rama in exile, her abduction by the demon king Ravana, his (Sri Rama's) war with and destruction of Ravana and eventual rescue of Sita, and his return with Sita to Ayodhya, where he was coronated – these are the main events of the major part of the story of Ramayana. Subsequently, Sri Rama, under the compulsion of public disapproval of the acceptance of Sita, since she had lived in captivity at Ravana's palace, exiled Sita from his kingdom. The difficult decision he had to take in this connection has raised much controversy about the responsibility of the King in the discharge of his public duties and the role that public opinion should play in the life of the King. Sri Rama has been worshipped in India as an ideal son, ideal husband, ideal friend, ideal brother, ideal father and an ideal king and the pattern of kingdom that he established, Ramrajya, has been put forward as the highest ideal of governance, and it has always evoked in the Indian psyche, the highest dream for eventual realization. Sri Rama has been regarded and worshipped in India as God incarnated as an ideal man, an Avatar.

53. Commentary on the *Phaedo* by Benjamin Jowett
54. Cebes of Thebes, was a disciple of Socrates and Philolaus. He is one of the speakers in the Phaedo of Plato. Plato depicts him as a sincere seeker of truth and virtue.
55. *Meno* is a dialogue written by Plato, which has two central characters – Socrates and Meno. The basic aim of this dialogue is to expound the theory that knowledge is innate and carried by the soul from its past birth. In its new birth it is simply a recollection of the same knowledge.
56. Asclepius is said to be the Greek demigod of healing. Legend says that his father, Apollo, sent him to Chiron, a centaur, to learn the art of healing. He was so gifted that apart from healing, he could also restore life to the dead. Apprehensive about his restorative powers that could upset the natural order in the world, Zeus struck him down with his thunderbolt and transformed him into a constellation.
57. Xenophon, "The Memorabilia of Socrates", literally translated from the Greek by J.S. Watson (Philadelphia: D. McKay, 1899), iv, 8.

Athena
(430 BC)

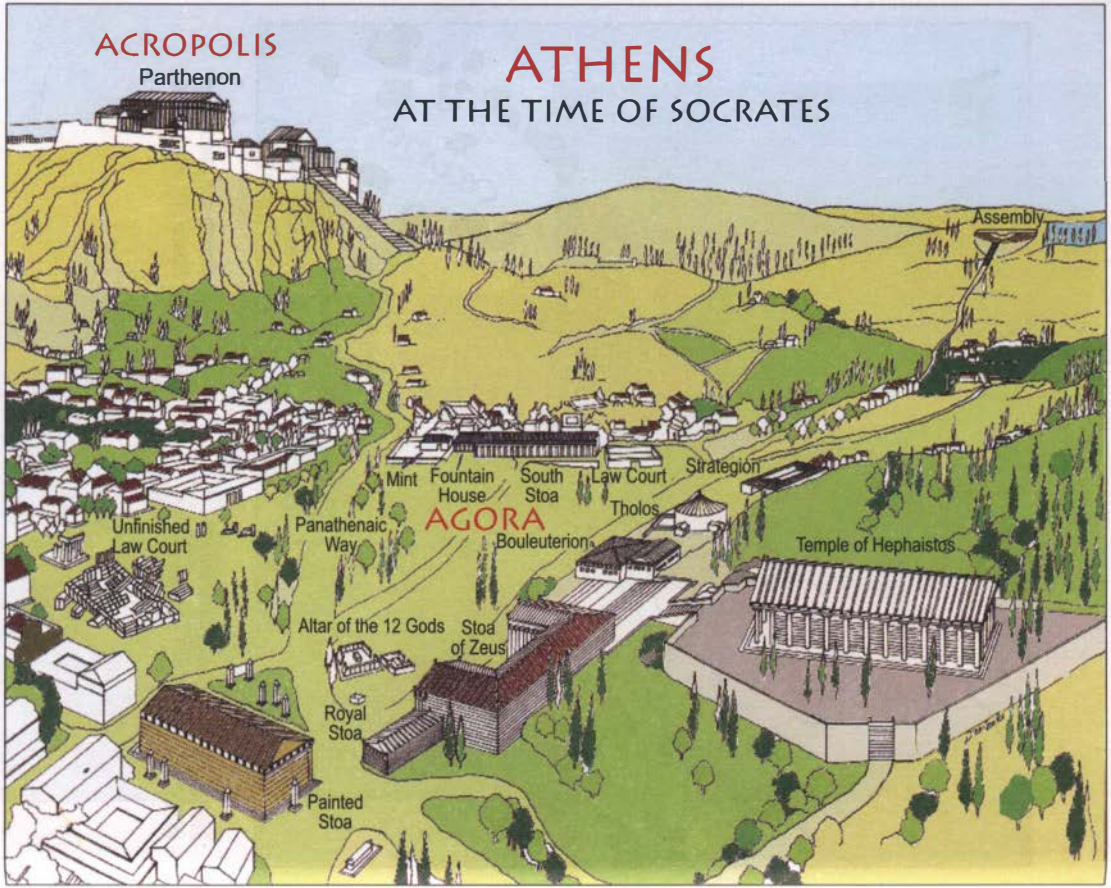
"Hear, Oh Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, conceived in Mother Metis, but born out of the of Father Zeus; Goddess of Battles, Goddess of Strategies, Goddess of Cities and Strong Citadels, Parthenos; Bearer of Victory, Nike; Councilor, Weaver, Goldsmith Goddess of Olives and Oils, Goddess of Competitions, of Commerce, Strong Advocate of Just Laws, Tritogenia; we call upon You with whatever name it pleases You to be called! If ever we have made offering to You, or honored You in word or deed, grant us that Arete which is the goal of mortal life."



Top:
Sophocles
(3rd century
bronze)

Right:
Aristotle

GREECE – 362 BC


ACROPOLIS
Parthenon
ATHENS
AT THE TIME OF SOCRATES
Assembly
Mint
Fountain House
South Stoa
Law Court
Strategion
AGORA
Tholos
Unfinished Law Court
Panathenaic Way
Bouleuterion
Temple of Hephaistos
Altar of the 12 Gods
Stoa of Zeus
Royal Stoa
Painted Stoa

Apology

Plato

I do not know what effect my accusers have had upon you, gentlemen, but for my own part I was almost carried away by them; their arguments were so convincing. On the other hand, scarcely a word of what they said was true. I was especially astonished at one of their many misrepresentations: I mean when they told you that you must be careful not to let me deceive you – the implication being that I am a skilful speaker. I thought that it was peculiarly brazen of them to tell you this without a blush, since they must know that they will soon be effectively confuted, when it becomes obvious that I have not the slightest skill as a speaker unless, of course, by a skilful speaker they mean one who speaks the truth. If that is what they mean, I would agree that I am an orator, though not after their pattern.

My accusers, then, as I maintain, have said little or nothing that is true, but from me you shall hear the whole truth; not, I can assure you, gentlemen, in flowery language like theirs, decked out with fine words and phrases; no, what you will hear will be a straightforward speech in the first words that occur to me, confident as I am in the justice of my cause; and I do not want any of you to expect anything different. It would hardly be suitable, gentlemen, for a man of my age to address you in the artificial language of a schoolboy orator.

One thing, however, I do most earnestly beg and entreat of you: if you hear me defending myself in the same language which it has been my habit to use, both in the open spaces of this city[1] (where many of you have heard me) and elsewhere, do not be surprised, and do not interrupt. Let me remind you of my position. This is my first appearance in a court of law, at the age of seventy; and so I am a complete stranger to the language of this place. Now if I were really from another country, you would naturally excuse me if I spoke in the manner and dialect in which I had been brought up; and so in the present case I make this request of you, which I think is only reasonable: to disregard the manner of my speech – it may be better or it may be worse – and to consider and concentrate your attention upon this one question, whether my claims are fair or not. That is the first duty of the juryman, just as it is the pleader's duty to speak the truth.

The proper course for me, gentlemen of the jury, is to deal first with the earliest charges that have been falsely brought against me, and with my earliest accusers; and then with the later ones. I make this distinction because I have already been accused in your hearing by a great many people for a great many years, though without a word of truth; and I am more afraid of those people than I am of Anytus and his colleagues,[2] although they are formidable enough. But the others are still more formidable; I mean the people who took hold of so many of you when you were children and tried to fill your minds with untrue accusations against me, saying "There is a wise man called Socrates who has theories about the heavens and has investigated everything below the earth, and can make the weaker argument defeat the stronger." It is these people, gentlemen, the disseminators of these rumours, who are my dangerous accusers; because those who hear them suppose that anyone who inquires into such matters must be an atheist. Besides, there are a great many of these accusers, and they have been accusing me now for a great many years; and what is more, they approached you at the most impressionable age,

when some of you were children or adolescents; and they literally won their case by default, because there was no one to defend me. And the most fantastic thing of all is that it is impossible for me even to know and tell you their names, unless one of them happens to be a playwright.[3] All these people, who have tried to set you against me out of envy and love of slander – and some too merely passing on what they have been told by others – all these are very difficult to deal with. It is impossible to bring them here for cross-examination; one simply has to conduct one's defence and argue one's case against an invisible opponent, because there is no one to answer. So I ask you to accept my statement that my critics fall into two classes: on the one hand my immediate accusers, and on the other those earlier ones whom I have mentioned; and you must suppose that I have first to defend myself against the latter. After all, you heard them abusing me longer ago and much more violently than these more recent accusers.

Very well then; I must begin my defence, gentlemen, and I must try, in the short time that I have, to rid your minds of a false impression which is the work of many years. I should like this to be the result, gentlemen, assuming it to be for your advantage and my own; and I should like to be successful in my defence; but I think that it will be difficult, and I am quite aware of the nature of my task. However, let that turn out as God wills; I must obey the law and make my defence.

Let us go back to the beginning and consider what the charge is that has made me so unpopular, and has encouraged Meletus to draw up this indictment. Very well; what did my critics say in attacking my character? I must read out their affidavit, so to speak, as though they were my legal accusers. "Socrates is guilty of criminal meddling, in that he inquires into things below the earth and in the sky, and makes the weaker argument defeat the stronger, and teaches others to follow his example." It runs something like that. You have seen it for yourselves in the play by Aristophanes, where Socrates goes whirling round,[4] proclaiming that he is walking

on air, and uttering a great deal of other nonsense about things of which I know nothing whatsoever. I mean no disrespect for such knowledge, if anyone really is versed in it – I do not want any more lawsuits brought against me by Meletus – but the fact is, gentlemen, that I take no interest in it. What is more, I call upon the greater part of you as witnesses to my statement, and I appeal to all of you who have ever listened to me talking (and there are a great many to whom this applies) to clear your neighbours' minds on this point. Tell one another whether any one of you has ever heard me discuss such questions briefly or at length; and then you will realise that the other popular reports about me are equally unreliable.

The fact is that there is nothing in any of these charges; and if you have heard anyone say that I try to educate people and charge a fee, there is no truth in that either. I wish that there were, because I think that it is a fine thing if a man is qualified to teach, as in the case of Gorgias of Leontini,[5] and Prodicus of Ceos[6] and Hippias of Elis[7]. Each one of these is perfectly capable of going into any city and actually persuading the young men to leave the company of their fellow-citizens, with any of whom they can associate for nothing, and attach themselves to him, and pay money for the privilege, and be grateful into the bargain. There is another expert too from Paros who I discovered was here on a visit. I happened to meet a man who has paid more in sophists' fees than all the rest put together – I mean Callias,[8] the son of Hipponicus; so I asked him (he has two sons, you see): "Callias," I said, "if your sons had been colts or calves, we should have had no difficulty in finding and engaging a trainer to perfect their natural qualities; and this trainer would have been some sort of horse-dealer or agriculturalist. But seeing that they are human beings, whom do you intend to get as their instructor? who is the expert in perfecting the human and social qualities? I assume from the fact of your having sons that you must have considered the question. Is there such a person or not?" "Certainly", said he. "Who is he, and where does he come from?" said I, "and what does he

charge?" "Evenus of Paros,[9] Socrates", said he, "and his fee is twenty guineas." I felt that Evenus was to be congratulated if he really was a master of this art and taught it at such a moderate fee. I should certainly plume myself and give myself airs if I understood these things; but in fact, gentlemen, I do not.

Here perhaps one of you might interrupt me and say "But what is it that you do, Socrates? How is it that you have been misrepresented like this? Surely all this talk and gossip about you would never have arisen if you had confined yourself to ordinary activities, but only if your behaviour was abnormal. Tell us the explanation, if you do not want us to invent it for ourselves." This seems to me to be a reasonable request, and I will try to explain to you what it is that has given me this false notoriety; so please give me your attention. Perhaps some of you will think that I am not being serious; but I assure you that I am going to tell you the whole truth.

I have gained this reputation, gentlemen, from nothing more or less than a kind of wisdom. What kind of wisdom do I mean? Human wisdom, I suppose. It seems that I really am wise in this limited sense. Presumably the geniuses whom I mentioned just now are wise in a wisdom that is more than human; I do not know how else to account for it. I certainly have no knowledge of such wisdom, and anyone who says that I have is a liar and wilful slanderer. Now, gentlemen, please do not interrupt me if I seem to make an extravagant claim; for what I am going to tell you is not my own opinion; I am going to refer you to an unimpeachable authority. I shall call as witness to my wisdom (such as it is) the god at Delphi.[10]

You know Chaerephon,[11] of course. He was a friend of mine from boyhood, and a good democrat who played his part with the rest of you in the recent expulsion[12] and restoration. And you know what he was like; how enthusiastic he was over anything that he had once undertaken. Well, one day he actually went to Delphi and asked this question of the god – as I said before, gentlemen please do not interrupt – he asked whether there was anyone wiser than myself. The priestess

replied that there was no one. As Chaerephon is dead, the evidence for my statement will be supplied by his brother,[13] who is here in court.

Please consider my object in telling you this. I want to explain to you how the attack upon my reputation first started. When I heard about the oracle's answer, I said to myself "What does the god mean? Why does he not use plain language? I am only too conscious that I have no claim to wisdom, great or small; so what can he mean by asserting that I am the wisest man in the world? He cannot be telling a lie; that would not be right for him."

After puzzling about it for some time, I set myself at last with considerable reluctance to check the truth of it in the following way. I went to interview a man with a high reputation for wisdom, because I felt that here if anywhere I should succeed in disproving the oracle and pointing out to my divine authority "You said that I was the wisest of men, but here is a man who is wiser than I am."

Well, I gave a thorough examination to this person – I need not mention his name, but it was one of our politicians that I was studying when I had this experience – and in conversation with him I formed the impression that although in many people's opinion, and especially in his own, he appeared to be wise, in fact he was not. Then when I began to try to show him that he only thought he was wise and was not really so, my efforts were resented both by him and by many of the other people present. However, I reflected as I walked away: "Well, I am certainly wiser than this man. It is only too likely that neither of us has any knowledge to boast of; but he thinks that he knows something which he does not know, whereas I am quite conscious of my ignorance. At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he is to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know."

After this I went on to interview a man with an even greater reputation for wisdom, and I formed the same impression again; and here too I incurred the resentment of the man

himself and a number of others.

From that time on I interviewed one person after another. I realised with distress and alarm that I was making myself unpopular, but I felt compelled to put my religious duty first; since I was trying to find out the meaning of the oracle, I was bound to interview everyone who had a reputation for knowledge. And by Dog,[14] gentlemen! (for I must be frank with you) my honest impression was this: it seemed to me, as I pursued my investigation at the god's command, that the people with the greatest reputations were almost entirely deficient, while others who were supposed to be their inferiors were much better qualified in practical intelligence.

I want you to think of my adventures as a sort of pilgrimage[15] undertaken to establish the truth of the oracle once for all. After I had finished with the politicians I turned to the poets, dramatic, lyric, and all the rest, in the belief that here I should expose myself as a comparative ignoramus. I used to pick up what I thought were some of their most perfect works and question them closely about the meaning of what they had written, in the hope of incidentally enlarging my own knowledge. Well, gentlemen! I hesitate to tell you the truth, but it must be told. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that any of the bystanders could have explained those poems better than their actual authors. So I soon made up my mind about the poets too: I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean. It seemed clear to me that the poets were in much the same case; and I also observed that the very fact that they were poets made them think that they had a perfect understanding of all other subjects, of which they were totally ignorant. So I left that line of inquiry too with the same sense of advantage that I had felt in the case of the politicians.

Last of all I turned to the skilled craftsmen. I knew quite well that I had practically no technical qualifications myself,

and I was sure that I should find them full of impressive knowledge. In this I was not disappointed; they understood things which I did not, and to that extent they were wiser than I was. But, gentlemen, these professional experts seemed to share the same failing which I had noticed in the poets; I mean that on the strength of their technical proficiency they claimed a perfect understanding of every other subject, however important; and I felt that this error more than outweighed their positive wisdom. So. I made myself spokesman for the oracle, and asked myself whether I would rather be as I was – neither wise with their wisdom nor stupid with their stupidity – or possess both qualities as they did. I replied through myself to the oracle that it was best for me to be as I was.

The effect of these investigations of mine, gentlemen, has been to arouse against me a great deal of hostility, and hostility of a particularly bitter and persistent kind, which has resulted in various malicious suggestions, including the description of me as a professor of wisdom. This is due to the fact that whenever I succeed in disproving another person's claim to wisdom in a given subject, the bystanders assume that I know everything about that subject myself. But the truth of the matter, gentlemen, is pretty certainly this: that real wisdom is the property of God, and this oracle is his way of telling us that human wisdom has little or no value. It seems to me that he is not referring literally to Socrates, but has merely taken my name as an example, as if he would say to us "The wisest of you men is he who has realised, like Socrates, that in respect of wisdom he is really worthless."

That is why I still go about seeking and searching in obedience to the divine command, if I think that anyone is wise, whether citizen or stranger; and when I think that any person is not wise, I try to help the cause of God by proving that he is not. This occupation has kept me too busy to do much either in politics or in my own affairs; in fact, my service to God has reduced me to extreme poverty.

There is another reason for my being unpopular. A number of young men with wealthy fathers and plenty of leisure have deliberately attached themselves to me because they enjoy hearing other people cross-questioned. These often take me as their model, and go on to try to question other persons; whereupon, I suppose, they find an unlimited number of people who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing. Consequently their victims become annoyed, not with themselves but with me; and they complain that there is a pestilential busybody called Socrates who fills young people' heads with wrong ideas. If you ask them what he does, and what he teaches that has this effect, they have no answer, not knowing what to say; but as they do not want to admit their confusion, they fall back on the stock charges against any philosopher: that he teaches his pupils about things in the heavens and below the earth, and to disbelieve in gods, and to make the weaker argument defeat the stronger. They would be very loath, I fancy, to admit the truth: which is that they are being convicted of pretending to knowledge when they are entirely ignorant. So, jealous, I suppose, for their own reputation, and also energetic and numerically strong, and provided with a plausible and carefully worked-out case against me, these people have been dinning into your ears for a long time past their violent denunciations of myself. There you have the causes which led to the attack upon me by Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, Meletus being aggrieved on behalf of the poets, Anytus on behalf of the professional men and politicians, and Lycon on behalf of the orators. So, as I said at the beginning, I should be surprised if I were able, in the short time that I have, to rid your minds of a misconception so deeply implanted.

There, gentlemen, you have the true facts, which I present to you without any concealment or suppression, great or small. I am fairly certain that this plain speaking of mine is the cause of my unpopularity; and that I have described correctly the nature and the grounds of the calumny which has been brought against me. Whether you inquire into them now or

later, you will find the facts as I have just described them.

So much for my defence against the charges brought by the first group of my accusers. I shall now try to defend myself against Meletus high-principled and patriotic as he claims to be – and after that against the rest.

Let us consider their deposition again, as though it represented a fresh prosecution. It runs something like this: "Socrates is guilty of corrupting the minds of the young, and of believing in deities of his own invention instead of the gods recognised by the State." Such is the charge; let us examine its points one by one.

First it says that I am guilty of corrupting the young. But I say, gentlemen, that Meletus is guilty of treating a serious matter with levity, since he summons people to stand their trial on frivolous grounds, and professes concern and keen anxiety in matters about which he has never had the slightest interest. I will try to prove this to your satisfaction.

Come now, Meletus, tell me this. You regard it as supremely important, do you not, that our young people should be exposed to the best possible influence? "I do." Very well, then; tell these gentlemen who it is that influences the young for the better. Obviously you must know, if you are so much interested. You have discovered the vicious influence, as you say, in myself, and you are now prosecuting me before these gentlemen; speak up and inform them who it is that has a good influence upon the young. – You see, Meletus, that you are tongue-tied and cannot answer. Do you not feel that this is discreditable, and a sufficient proof in itself of what I said, that you have no interest in the subject? Tell me, my friend, who is it that makes the young good? "The laws." That is not what I mean, my dear sir; I am asking you to name the person whose first business it is to know the laws. "These gentlemen here, Socrates, the members of the jury." Do you mean, Meletus, that they have the ability to educate the young, and to make them better? "Certainly." Does this apply to all jurymen, or only to some? "To all of them." Excellent! a generous supply

of benefactors. Well, then, do these spectators who are present in court have an improving influence, or not? "Yes, they do." And what about the members of the Council? "Yes, the Councillors too." But surely, Meletus, the members of the Assembly[16] do not corrupt the young? Or do all of them too exert an improving influence? "Yes, they do." Then it would seem that the whole population of Athens has a refining effect upon the young, except myself; and I alone demoralise them. Is that your meaning? "Most emphatically, yes." This is certainly a most unfortunate quality that you have detected in me. Well, let me put another question to you. Take the case of horses; do you believe that those who improve them make up the whole of mankind, and that there is only one person who has a bad effect on them? Or is the truth just the opposite, that the ability to improve them belongs to one person or to very few persons, who are horse-trainers, whereas most people, if they have to do with horses and make use of them, do them harm? Is not this the case, Meletus, both with horses and with all other animals? Of course it is, whether you and Anytus deny it or not. It would be a singular dispensation of fortune for our young people if there is only one person who corrupts them, while all the rest have a beneficial effect. But I need say no more; there is ample proof, Meletus, that you have never bothered your head about the young; and you make it perfectly clear that you have never taken the slightest interest in the cause for the sake of which you are now indicting me.

Here is another point. Tell me seriously, Meletus, is it better to live in a good or in a bad community? Answer my question, like a good fellow; there is nothing difficult about it. Is it not true that wicked people have a bad effect upon those with whom they are in the closest contact, and that good people have a good effect? "Quite true." Is there anyone who prefers to be harmed rather than benefited by his associates? Answer me, my good man; the law commands you to answer. Is there anyone who prefers to be harmed? "Of course not." Well, then, when you summon me before this court for corrupting

the young and making their characters worse, do you mean that I do so intentionally or unintentionally? "I mean intentionally." Why, Meletus, are you at your age so much wiser than I at mine? You have discovered that bad people always have a bad effect, and good people a good effect, upon their nearest neighbours; am I so hopelessly ignorant as not even to realise that by spoiling the character of one of my companions I shall run the risk of getting some harm from him? because nothing else would make me commit this grave offence intentionally. No, I do not believe it, Meletus, and I do not suppose that anyone else does. Either I have not a bad influence, or it is unintentional; so that in either case your accusation is false. And if I unintentionally have a bad influence, the correct procedure in cases of such involuntary misdemeanours is not to summon the culprit before this court, but to take him aside privately for instruction and reproof; because obviously if my eyes are opened, I shall stop doing what I do not intend to do. But you deliberately avoided my company in the past and refused to enlighten me, and now you bring me before this court, which is the place appointed for those who need punishment, not for those who need enlightenment.

It is quite clear by now, gentlemen, that Meletus, as I said before, has never shown any degree of interest in this subject. However, I invite you to tell us, Meletus, in what sense you make out that I corrupt the minds of the young. Surely the terms of your indictment make it clear that you accuse me of teaching them to believe in new deities instead of the gods recognised by the State; is not that the teaching of mine which you say has this demoralising effect? "That is precisely what I maintain." Then I appeal to you, Meletus, in the name of these same gods about whom we are speaking, to explain yourself a little more clearly to myself and to the jury, because I cannot make out what your point is. Is it that I teach people to believe in some gods (which implies that I myself believe in gods, and am not a complete atheist, so that I am not guilty on that score), but in different gods from those recognised by the

State, so that your accusation rests upon the fact that they are different? Or do you assert that I believe in no gods at all, and teach others to do the same? "Yes; I say that you disbelieve in gods altogether." You surprise me, Meletus; what is your object in saying that? do you suggest that I do not believe that the sun and moon are gods,[17] as is the general belief of all mankind? "He certainly does not, gentlemen of the jury, since he says that the sun is a stone and the moon a mass of earth." Do you imagine that you are prosecuting Anaxagoras, my dear Meletus? Have you so poor an opinion of these gentlemen, and do you assume them to be so illiterate as not to know that the writings of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae[18] are full of theories like these? and do you seriously suggest that it is from me that the young get these ideas, when they can buy them on occasion in the market-place[19] for a shilling at most, and so have the laugh on Socrates if he claims them for his own, to say nothing of their being so silly? Tell me honestly, Meletus, is that your opinion of me? do I believe in no god? "No, none at all; not in the slightest degree." You are not at all convincing, Meletus; not even to yourself, I suspect. In my opinion, gentlemen, this man is a thoroughly selfish bully, and has brought this action against me out of sheer wanton aggressiveness and self-assertion. He seems to be devising a sort of intelligence test for me, saying to himself "Will the infallible Socrates realise that I am contradicting myself for my own amusement, or shall I succeed in deceiving him and the rest of my audience?" It certainly seems to me that he is contradicting himself in this indictment, which might just as well run "Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, but believing in the gods." And this is pure flippancy.

I ask you to examine with me, gentlemen, the line of reasoning which leads me to this conclusion. You, Meletus, will oblige us by answering my questions. Will you all kindly remember, as I requested at the beginning, not to interrupt if I conduct the discussion in my customary way?

Is there anyone in the world, Meletus, who believes in

human activities, and not in human beings? Make him answer, gentlemen, and don't let him keep on making these continual objections. Is there anyone who does not believe in horses, but believes in horses' activities? or who does not believe in musicians, but believes in musical activities? No, there is not, my worthy friend. If you do not want to answer, I will supply it for you and for these gentlemen too. But the next question you must answer: Is there anyone who believes in supernatural activities and not in supernatural beings?[20] "No." How good of you to give a bare answer under compulsion by the court! Well, do you assert that I believe and teach others to believe in supernatural activities? It does not matter whether they are new or old; the fact remains that I believe in them according to your statement; indeed you solemnly swore as much in your affidavit. But if I believe in supernatural activities, it follows inevitably that I also believe in supernatural beings. Is not that so? It is; I assume your assent, since you do not answer. Do we not hold that supernatural beings are either gods or the children of gods? Do you agree or not? "Certainly." Then if I believe in supernatural beings, as you assert, if these supernatural beings are gods in any sense, we shall reach the conclusion which I mentioned just now when I said that you were testing my intelligence for your own amusement, by stating first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do, since I believe in supernatural beings. If on the other hand these supernatural beings are bastard children[21] of the gods by nymphs or other mothers, as they are reputed to be, who in the world would believe in the children of gods and not in the gods themselves? It would be as ridiculous as to believe in the young of horses or donkeys and not in horses and donkeys themselves. No, Meletus; there is not avoiding the conclusion that you brought this charge against me as a test of my wisdom, or else in despair of finding a genuine offence of which to accuse me. As for your prospect of convincing any living person with even a smattering of intelligence that belief in supernatural and divine activities does not imply belief in

supernatural and divine beings, and vice versa, it is outside all the bounds of possibility.

As a matter of fact, gentlemen, I do not feel that it requires much defence to clear myself of Meletus' accusation; what I have said already is enough. But you know very well the truth of what I said in an earlier part of my speech, that I have incurred a great deal of bitter hostility; and this is what will bring about my destruction, if anything does; not Meletus nor Anytus, but the slander and jealousy of a very large section of the people. They have been fatal to a great many other innocent men, and I suppose will continue to be so; there is not likelihood that they will stop at me. But perhaps someone will say "Do you feel no compunction, Socrates, at having followed a line of action which puts you in danger of the death-penalty?" I might fairly reply to him "You are mistaken, my friend, if you think that a man who is worth anything ought to spend his time weighing up the prospects of life and death. He has only one thing to consider in performing any action; that is, whether he is acting rightly or wrongly, like a good man or a bad one. On your view the heroes who died at Troy would be poor creatures, especially the son of Thetis.[22] He, if you remember, made so light of danger in comparison with incurring dishonour that when his goddess mother warned him, eager as he was to kill Hector, in some such words as these, I fancy, 'My son, if you avenge your comrade Patroclus' death and kill Hector, you will die yourself;

> Next after Hector is thy fate prepared,'

– when he heard this warning, he made light of his death and danger, being much more afraid of an ignoble life and of failing to avenge his friends. 'Let me die forthwith', said he, 'when I have requited the villain, rather than remain here by the beaked ships to be mocked, a burden on the ground.' Do you suppose that he gave a thought of death and danger?"

The truth of the matter is this, gentlemen. Where a man has

once taken up his stand, either because it seems best to him or in obedience to his orders, there I believe he is bound to remain and face the danger, taking no account of death or anything else before dishonour.

This being so, it would be shocking inconsistency on my part, gentlemen, if, when the officers whom you chose to command me assigned me my position at Potidaea[23] and Amphipolis[24] and Delium,[25] I remained at my post like anyone else and faced death, and yet afterwards, when God appointed me, as I supposed and believed, to the duty of leading the philosophic life, examining myself and others, I were then through fear of death or of any other danger to desert my post. That would indeed be shocking, and then I might really with justice be summoned into court for not believing in the gods, and disobeying the oracle, and being afraid of death, and thinking that I am wise when I am not. For let me tell you, gentlemen, that to be afraid of death is only another form of thinking that one is wise when one is not; it is to think that one knows what one does not know. No one knows with regard to death whether it is not really the greatest blessing that can happen to a man; but people dread it as though they were certain that it is the greatest evil; and this ignorance, which thinks that it knows what it does not, must surely be ignorance most culpable. This, I take it, gentlemen, is the degree, and this the nature of my advantage over the rest of mankind; and if I were to claim to be wiser than my neighbour in any respect, it would be in this: that not possessing any real knowledge of what comes after death, I am also conscious that I do not possess it. But I do know that to do wrong and to disobey my superior, whether God or man, is wicked and dishonourable; and so I shall never feel more fear or aversion for something which, for all I know, may really be a blessing, than for those evils which I know to be evils.

Suppose, then, that you acquit me, and pay no attention to Anytus, who has said that either I should not have appeared before this court at all, or, since I have appeared here, I must

be put to death, because if I once escaped your sons would all immediately become utterly demoralised by putting the teaching of Socrates into practice. Suppose that, in view of this, you said to me "Socrates, on this occasion we shall disregard Anytus and acquit you, but only on one condition, that you give up spending your time on this quest and stop philosophizing. If we catch you going on in the same way, you shall be put to death." Well, supposing, as I said, that you should offer to acquit me on these terms, I should reply "Gentlemen, I am your very grateful and devoted servant, but I owe a greater obedience to God than to you; and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practising philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone that I meet. I shall go on saying, in my usual way, My very good friend, you are an Athenian and belong to a city which is the greatest and most famous in the world for its wisdom and strength. Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honour, and give no attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?" And if any of you disputes this and professes to care about these things, I shall not at once let him go or leave him; and if it appears that in spite of his profession he has made no real progress towards goodness, I shall reprove him for neglecting what is of supreme importance, and giving his attention to trivialities. I shall do this to everyone that I meet, young or old, foreigner or fellow-citizen; but especially to you my fellow-citizens, inasmuch as you are closer to me in kinship. This, I do assure you, is what my God commands; and it is my belief that no greater good has ever befallen you in this city than my service to my God; for I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls, proclaiming as I go "Wealth does not bring goodness, but goodness brings wealth and every other blessing, both to the individual

and to the State." Now if I corrupt the young by this message, the message would seem to be harmful; but if anyone says that my message is different from this, he is talking nonsense. And so, gentlemen, I would say, "You can please yourselves whether you listen to Anytus or not, and whether you acquit me or not; you know that I am not going to alter my conduct, not even if I have to die a hundred deaths."

Order, please, gentlemen! Remember my request to give me a hearing without interruption; besides, I believe that it will be to your advantage to listen. I am going to tell you something else, which may provoke a storm of protest; but please restrain yourselves. I assure you that if I am what I claim to be, and you put me to death, you will harm yourselves more than me. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can do me any harm at all; they would not have the power, because I do not believe that the law of God permits a better man to be harmed by a worse. No doubt my accuser might put me to death or have me banished or deprived of civic rights; but even if he thinks, as he probably does (and others too, I dare say), that these are great calamities, I do not think so; I believe that it is far worse to do what he is doing now, trying to put an innocent man to death. For this reason, gentlemen, so far from pleading on my own behalf, as might be supposed, I am really pleading on yours, to save you from misusing the gift of God by condemning me. If you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true (even if it sounds rather comical) that God has specially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly; and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, reproving every one of you. You will not easily find another like me, gentlemen, and if you take my advice you will spare my life. I suspect, however, that before long you will awake from your drowsing, and in your

annoyance you will take Anytus' advice and finish me off with a single slap; and then you will go on sleeping till the end of your days, unless God in his care for you sends someone to take my place.

If you doubt whether I am really the sort of person who would have been sent to this city as a gift from God, you can convince yourselves by looking at it in this way. Does it seem natural that I should have neglected my own affairs and endured the humiliation of allowing my family to be neglected for all these years, while I busied myself all the time on your behalf, going like a father or an elder brother to see each one of you privately, and urging you to set your thoughts on goooodness? If I had got any enjoyment from it, or if I had been paid for my good advice, there would have been some explanation for my conduct; but as it is you can see for yourselves that although my accusers unblushingly charge me with all sorts of other crimes, there is one thing that they have not had the impudence to pretend on any testimony, and that is that I have ever exacted or asked a fee from anyone. The witness that I can offer to prove the truth of my statement is, I think, a convincing one – my poverty.

It may seem curious that I should go round giving advice like this and busying myself in people's private affairs, and yet never venture publicly to address you as a whole and advise on matters of state. The reason for this is what you have often heard me say before on many other occasions: that I am subject to a divine or supernatural experience, which Meletus saw fit to travesty in his indictment. It began in my early childhood – a sort of voice which comes to me; and when it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do, and never urges me on. It is this that debars me from entering public life, and a very good thing too, in my opinion; because you may be quite sure, gentlemen, that if I had tried long ago to engage in politics, I should long ago have lost my life, without doing any good either to you or to myself. Please do not be offended if I tell you the truth. No man on earth who

conscientiously opposes either you or any other organised democracy, and flatly prevents a great many wrongs and illegalities from taking place in the state to which he belongs, can possibly escape with his life. The true champion of justice, if he intends to survive even for a short time, must necessarily confine himself to private life and leave politics alone.

I will offer you substantial proofs of what I have said; not theories, but what you can appreciate better, facts. Listen while I describe my actual experiences, so that you may know that I would never submit wrongly to any authority through fear of death, but would refuse even at the cost of my life. It will be a commonplace story, such as you often hear in the courts; but it is true.

The only office which I have ever held in our city, gentlemen, was when I was elected to the Council.[26] It so happened that our group was acting as the executive when you decided that the ten commanders who had failed to rescue the men who were lost in the naval engagement[27] should be tried en bloc; which was illegal, as you all recognised later. On this occasion I was the only member of the executive who insisted that you should not act unconstitutionally, and voted against the proposal; and although your leaders were all ready to denounce and arrest me, and you were all urging them on at the top of your voices, I thought that it was my duty to face it out on the side of law and justice rather than support you, through fear of prison or death, in your wrong decision.

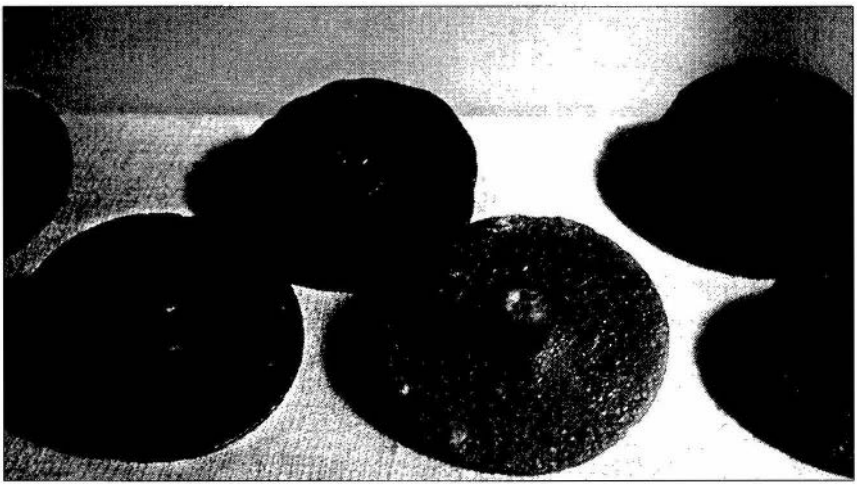
This happened while we were still under a democracy. When the oligarchy came into power, the Thirty Commissioners in their turn summoned me and four others to the Round Chamber[28] and instructed us to go and fetch Leon of Salamis from his home for execution. This was of course only one of many instances in which they issued such instructions, their object being to implicate as many people as possible in their wickedness. On this occasion, however, I again made it clear not by my words but by my actions that death did not matter to me at all (if that is not too strong an expression); but that it

mattered all the world to me that I should do nothing wrong or wicked. Powerful as it was, that government did not terrify me into doing a wrong action; when we came out of the Round Chamber the other four went off to Salamis and arrested Leon, and I went home. I should probably have been put to death for this, if the government had not fallen soon afterwards. There are plenty of people who will testify to these statements.

Do you suppose that I should have lived as long as I have if I had moved in the sphere of public life, and conducting myself in that sphere like an honourable man, had always upheld the cause of right, and conscientiously set this end above all other things? Not by a very long way, gentlemen; neither would any other man. You will find that throughout my life I have been consistent in any public duties that I have performed, and the same also in my personal dealings: I have never countenanced any action that was incompatible with justice on the part of any person, including those whom some people maliciously call my pupils. I have never set up as any man's teacher; but if anyone, young or old, is eager to hear me conversing and carrying out my private mission, I never grudge him the opportunity; nor do charge a fee for talking to him, and refuse to talk without one; I am ready to answer questions for rich and poor alike, and I am equally ready if anyone prefers to listen to me and answer my questions. If any given one of these people becomes a good citizen or a bad one, I cannot fairly be held responsible, since I have never promised or imparted any teaching to anybody; and if anyone asserts that he has ever learned or heard from me privately anything which was not open to everyone else, you may be quite sure that he is not telling the truth.

But how is it that some people enjoy spending a great deal of time in my company? You have heard the reason, gentlemen; I told you quite frankly. It is because they enjoy hearing me examine those who think that they are wise when they are not; an experience which has its amusing side. This duty I have accepted, as I said, in obedience to God's commands

given in oracles and dreams[29] and in every other way that any other divine dispensation has ever impressed a duty upon man. This is a true statement, gentlemen, and easy to verify. If it is a fact that I am in process of corrupting some of the young, and have succeeded already in corrupting others; and if it were a fact that some of the latter, being now grown up, had discovered that I had ever given them bad advice when they were young, surely they ought now to be coming forward to denounce and punish me; and if they did not like to do it themselves, you would expect some of their families – their fathers and brothers and other near relations – to remember it now, if their own flesh and blood had suffered any harm from me. Certainly a great many of them have found their way into this court, as I can see for myself: first Crito[30] – over there, my contemporary and near neighbour, the father of this young man Critobulus; and then Lysanias of Sphettus,[31] the father of Aeschines here; and next Antiphon of Cephisia, over there, the father of Epigenes. Then besides there are all those whose brothers have been members of our circle: Nicostratus the son of Theozotides, the brother of Theodotus – but Theodotus is dead, so he cannot appeal to his brother – and Paralius here, the son of Demodocus; his brother was Theages. And here is Adimantus, the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato is over there; and Aeantodorus, whose brother Apollodorus is here on this side. I can name many more besides, some of whom Meletus most certainly ought to have produced as witness in the course of his speech. If he forgot to do so then, let him do it now – I am willing to make way for him; let him state whether he has any such evidence to offer. On the contrary, gentlemen, you will find that they are all prepared to help me – the corrupter and evil genius of their nearest and dearest elatives, as Meletus and Anytus say. The actual victims of my corrupting influence might perhaps be excused for helping me; but as for the uncorrupted, their relations of mature age, what other reason can they have for helping me except the right and proper one, that they know Meletus



Jurors' ballots

is lying and I am telling the truth?

There gentlemen: that, and perhaps a little more to the same effect, is the substance of what I can say in my defence. It may be that some one of you, remembering his own case, will be annoyed that whereas he, in standing his trial upon a less serious charge than this, made pitiful appeals to the jury with floods of tears, and had his infant children produced in court to excite the maximum of sympathy, and many of his relatives and friends as well, I on the contrary intend to do nothing of the sort, and that although I am facing (as it might appear) the utmost danger. It may be that one of you, reflecting on these facts, will be prejudiced against me, and being irritated by his reflections, will give his vote in anger. If one of you is so disposed – I do not expect it, but there is the possibility – I think that I should be quite justified in saying to him "My dear sir, of course I have some relatives. To quote the very words of Homer, even I am not sprung 'from an oak or from a rock',[32] but from human parents, and consequently I have relatives; yes, and sons[33] too, gentlemen, three of them, one almost grown up and the other two only children; but all

the same I am not going to produce them here and beseech you to acquit me."

Why do I not intend to do anything of this kind? Not out of perversity, gentlemen, nor out of contempt for you; whether I am brave or not in the face of death has nothing to do with it; the point is that for my own credit and yours and for the credit of the state as a whole, I do not think that it is right for me to use any of these methods at my age and with my reputation – which may be true or it may be false, but at any rate the view is held that Socrates is different from the common run of mankind. Now if those of you who are supposed to be distinguished for wisdom or courage or any other virtue are to behave in this way, it would be a disgrace. I have often noticed that some people of this type, for all their high standing, go to extraordinary lengths when they come up for trial, which shows that they think it will be a dreadful thing to lose their lives; as though they would be immortal if you did not put them to death! In my opinion these people bring disgrace upon our city. Any of our visitors might be excused for thinking that the finest specimens of Athenian manhood, whom their fellow-citizens select on their merits to rule over them and hold other high positions, are no better than women. If you have even the smallest reputation, gentlemen, you ought not to descend to these methods; and if we do so, you must not give us licence. On the contrary, you must make it clear that anyone who stages these pathetic scenes and so brings ridicule upon our city is far more likely to be condemned than if he kept perfectly quiet.

But apart from all question of appearances, gentlemen, I do not think that it is right for a man to appeal to the jury or to get himself acquitted by doing so; he ought to inform them of the facts and convince them by argument. The jury does not sit to dispense justice as a favour, but to decide where justice lies; and the oath which they have sworn is not to show favour at their own discretion, but to return a just and lawful verdict. It follows that we must not develop in you, nor you allow to

grow in yourselves, the habit of perjury; that would be sinful for us both. Therefore you must not expect me, gentlemen, to behave towards you in a way which I consider neither reputable nor moral nor consistent with my religious duty; and above all you must not expect it when I stand charged with impiety by Meletus here. Surely it is obvious that if I tried to persuade you and prevail upon you by my entreaties to go against your solemn oath, I should be teaching you contempt for religion; and by my very defence I should be accusing myself of having no religious belief. But that is very far from the truth. I have a more sincere belief, gentlemen, than any of my accusers; and I leave it to you and to God to judge me as it shall be best for me and for yourselves.

(The verdict is "Guilty", and Meletus proposes the penalty of death)

There are a great many reasons, gentlemen, why I am not distressed by this result – I mean your condemnation of me – but the chief reason is that the result was not unexpected. What does surprise me is the number of votes cast on the two sides. I should never have believed that it would be such a close thing; but now it seems that if a mere thirty votes[34] had gone the other way, I should have been acquitted. Even as it is, I feel that so far as Meletus' part is concerned I have been acquitted; and not only that, but anyone can see that if Anytus and Lycon had not come forward to accuse me, Meletus would actually have forfeited his 50 pounds for not having obtained one-fifth[35] of the votes.

However, we must face the fact that he demands the death-penalty. Very good. What alternative penalty shall I propose to you, gentlemen? Obviously it must be adequate. Well, what penalty do I deserve to pay or suffer, in view of what I have done?

I have never lived an ordinary quiet life. I did not care for the things that most people care about: making money, having

a comfortable home, high military or civil rank, and all the other activities – political appointments, secret societies, party organisations – which go on in our city; I thought that I was really too strict in my principles to survive if I went in for this sort of thing. So instead of taking a course which would have done no good either to you or to me, I set myself to do you individually in private what I hold to be the greatest possible service: I tried to persuade each one of you not to think more of practical advantages than of his mental and moral well-being, or in general to think more of advantage than of well-being in the case of the state or of anything else. What do I deserve for behaving in this way? Some reward, gentlemen, if I am bound to suggest what I really deserve; and what is more, a reward which would be appropriate for myself. Well, what is appropriate for a poor man who is a public benefactor and who requires leisure for giving you moral encouragement? Nothing could be more appropriate for such a person than free maintenance[36] at the State's expense. He deserves it much more than any victor in the races at Olympia, whether he wins with a single horse or a pair or a team of four. These people give you the semblance of success, but I give you the reality; they do not need maintenance, but I do. So if I am to suggest an appropriate penalty which is strictly in accordance with justice, I suggest free maintenance by the State.

Perhaps when I say this I may give you the impression, as I did in my remarks about exciting sympathy and making passionate appeals, that I am showing a deliberate perversity. That is not so, gentlemen; the real position is this. I am convinced that I never wrong anyone intentionally, but I cannot convince you of this, because we have had so little time for discussion. If it was your practice, as it is with other nations, to give not one day but several to the hearing of capital trials, I believe that you might have been convinced; but under present conditions it is not easy to dispose of grave allegations in a short space of time. So being convinced that I do no wrong to anybody, I can hardly be expected to wrong myself by asserting

that I deserve something bad, or by proposing a corresponding penalty. Why should I? For fear of suffering this penalty proposed by Meletus, when, as I said, I do not know whether it is a good thing or a bad? Do you expect me to choose something which I know very well is bad by making my counter-proposal? Imprisonment? Why should I spend my days in prison, in subjection to the periodically appointed officers of the law? A fine, with imprisonment until it is paid? In my case the effect would be just the same, because I have no money to pay a fine. Or shall I suggest banishment?[37] You would very likely accept the suggestion.

I should have to be desperately in love with life to do that, gentlemen. I am not so blind that I cannot see that you, my fellow-citizens, have come to the end of your patience with my discussions and conversations; you have found them too irksome and irritating, and now you are trying to get rid of them. Will any other people find them easy to put up with? That is most unlikely, gentlemen. A fine life I should have if I left this country at my age and spent the rest of my days trying one city after another and being turned out every time! I know very well that wherever I go the young people will listen to my conversation just as they do here; and if I try to keep them off, they will make their elders drive me out, while if I do not, the fathers and other relatives will drive me out of their own accord for the sake of the young.

Perhaps someone may say "But surely, Socrates, after you have left us you can spend the rest of your life in quietly minding your own business." This is the hardest thing of all to make some of you understand. If I say that this would be disobedience to God, and that is why I cannot "mind my own business", you will not believe that I am serious. If on the other hand I tell you that to let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living, you will be even less

Silver coin with image of Goddess Athena, 6th century BC

inclined to believe me. Nevertheless that is how it is, gentlemen, as I maintain; though it is not easy to convince you of it. Besides, I am not accustomed to think of myself as deserving punishment. If I had money, I would have suggested a fine that I could afford, because that would not have done me any harm. As it is, I cannot, because I have none; unless of course you like to fix the penalty at what I could pay. I suppose I could probably afford five pounds.[38] I suggest a fine of that amount.

One moment, gentlemen. Plato here, and Crito and Critobulus and Apollodorus, want me to propose 150 pounds, on their security. Very well, I agree to this sum, and you can rely upon these gentlemen for its payment.

(The jury decides for the death-penalty)

Well, gentlemen, for the sake of a very small gain in time you are going to earn the reputation – and the blame from those who wish to disparage our city – of having put Socrates to death, "that wise man" – because they will say I am wise even if I am not, these people who want to find fault with you. If you had waited just a little while, you would have had your way in the course of nature. You can see that I am well on in life and near to death. I am saying this not to all of you but to those who voted for my execution, and I have something else to say to them as well.

No doubt you think, gentlemen, that I have been condemned for lack of the arguments which I could have used if I

had thought it right to leave nothing unsaid or undone to secure my acquittal. But that is very far from the truth. It is not a lack of arguments that has caused my condemnation, but a lack of effrontery and impudence, and the fact that I have refused to address you in the way which would give you most pleasure. You would have liked to hear me weep and wail, doing and saying all sorts of things which I regard as unworthy of myself, but which you are used to hearing from other people. But I did not think then that I ought to stoop to servility because I was in danger, and I do not regret now the way in which I pleaded my case; I would much rather die as the result of this defence than live as the result of the other sort. In a court of law, just as in warfare, neither I nor any other ought to use his wits to escape death by any means. In battle it is often obvious that you could escape being killed by giving up your arms and throwing yourself upon the mercy of your pursuers; and in every kind of danger there are plenty of devices for avoiding death if you are unscrupulous enough to stick at nothing. But I suggest, gentlemen, that the difficulty is not so much to escape death; the real difficulty is to escape from doing wrong, which is far more fleet of foot. In this present instance, I, the slow old man, have been overtaken by the slower of the two, but my accusers, who are clever and quick, have been overtaken by the faster: by iniquity. When I leave this court I shall go away condemned by you to death, but they will go away convicted by Truth herself of depravity and wickedness. And they accept their sentence even as I accept mine. No doubt it was bound to be so, and I think that the result is fair enough.

Having said so much, I feel moved to prophesy to you who have given your vote against me; for I am now at that point where the gift of prophecy comes most readily to men: at the point of death. I tell you, my executioners, that as soon as I am dead, vengeance shall fall upon you with a punishment far more painful than your killing of me. You have brought about my death in the belief that through it you will be delivered

from submitting your conduct to criticism; but I say that the result will be just the opposite. You will have more critics, whom up till now I have restrained without your knowing it; and being younger they will be harsher to you and will cause you more annoyance.

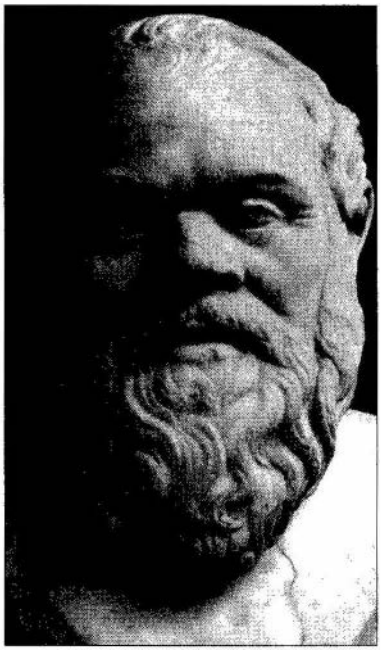
If you expect to stop denunciation of your wrong way of life by putting people to death, there is something amiss with your reasoning. This way of escape is neither possible nor creditable; the best and easiest way is not to stop the mouths of others, but to make yourselves as good men as you can. This is my last message to you who voted for my condemnation.

As for you who voted for my acquittal, I should very much like to say a few words to reconcile you to the result, while the officials are busy and I am not yet on my way to the place where I must die. I ask you, gentlemen, to spare me these few moments; there is no reason why we should not exchange fancies while the law permits. I look upon you as my friends, and I want you to understand the right way of regarding my present position.

Gentlemen of the jury – for you deserve to be so called – I have had a remarkable experience. In the past the prophetic voice to which I have become accustomed has always been my constant companion, opposing me even in quite trivial things if I was going to take the wrong course. Now something has happened to me, as you can see, which might be thought and is commonly considered to be a supreme calamity; yet neither when I left home this morning, nor when I was taking my place here in the court, nor at any point in any part of my speech did the divine sign oppose me. In other discussions it has often checked me in the middle of a sentence; but this time it has never opposed me in any part of this business in anything that I have said or done. What do I suppose to be the explanation? I will tell you. I suspect that this thing that has happened to me is a blessing, and we are quite mistaken in supposing death to be an evil. I have good grounds for

thinking this, because my accustomed sign could not have failed to oppose me if what I was doing had not been sure to bring some good result.

We should reflect that there is much reason to hope for a good result on other grounds as well. Death is one of two things. Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything; or, as we are told,[40] it is really a change: a migration of the soul from this place to another. Now if there is no consciousness but only a dreamless sleep, death must be a marvellous gain. I suppose that if anyone were told to pick out the night on which he slept so soundly as not even to dream, and then to compare it with all the other nights and days of his life, and then were told to say, after due consideration, how many better and happier days and nights than this he had spent in the course of his life – well, I think that the Great King[41] himself, to say nothing of any private person, would find these days and nights easy to count in comparison with the rest. If death is like this, then, I call it gain; because the whole of time, if you look at it in this way, can be regarded as no more than one single night. If on the other hand death is a removal from here to some other place, and if what we are told is true, that all the dead are there, what greater blessing could there be than this, gentlemen? If on arrival in the other world, beyond the reach of our so-called justice, one will find there the true judges who are said to preside in those courts, Minos and Rhadamanthys and Aeacus[42] and Triptolimus[43] and



Socrates

all those other half divinities who were upright in their earthly life, would that be an unrewarding journey? Put it in this way: how much would one of you give to meet Orpheus[44] and Musaeus,[45] Hesiod[46] and Homer? I am willing to die ten times over if this account is true. It would be a specially interesting experience for me to join them there, to meet Palamedes[47] and Ajax[48] the son of Telamon and any other heroes of the old days who met their death through an unfair trial, and to compare my fortunes with theirs – it would be rather amusing, I think –; and above all I should like to spend my time there, as here, in examining and searching people's minds, to find out who is really wise among them, and who only thinks that he is. What would one not give, gentlemen, to be able to question the leader of that great host against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus,[49] or the thousands of other men and women whom one could mention, to talk and mix and argue with whom would be unimaginable happiness? At any rate I presume that they do not put one to death there for such conduct; because apart from the other happiness in which their world surpasses ours, they are now immortal for the rest of time, if what we are told is true.

You too, gentlemen of the jury, must look forward to death with confidence, and fix your minds on this one belief, which is certain: that nothing can harm a good man either in life or after death, and his fortunes are not a matter of indifference to the gods. This present experience of mine has not come about mechanically; I am quite clear that the time had come when it was better for me to die and be released from my distractions. That is why my sign never turned me back. For my own part I bear no grudge at all against those who condemned me and accused me, although it was not with this kind intention that they did so, but because they thought that they were hurting me; and that is culpable of them. However, I ask them to grant me one favour. When my sons grow up, gentlemen, if you think that they are putting money or anything else before goodness, take your revenge by plaguing them as I plagued

The Parthenon (temple of Goddess Athena built on the Acropolis)

you; and if they fancy themselves for no reason, you must scold them just as I scolded you, for neglecting the important things and thinking that they are good for something when they are good for nothing. If you do this, I shall have had justice at your hands, both I myself and my children.

Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live; but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God.

Text from Plato:
The Last Days of Socrates, translation by Hugh Tredennick
(Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1961), pp. 45-76.

Notes

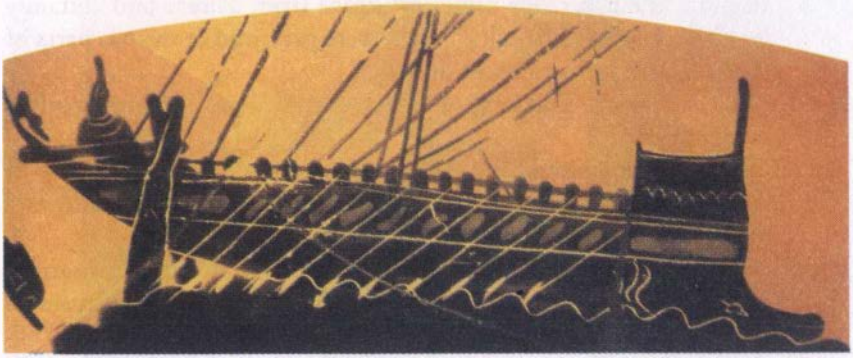
1. *in the open spaces of this city*: Literally "at the banker's counters in the market-place"; but this sounds odd in English, and conveys the false impression that he had business there; it was simply a good place for meeting people.
2. *Anytus and his colleagues*: viz. Meletus and Lycon. Meletus, a fiery and unpleasant young man, who probably had a personal grudge against Socrates, was the leader of the prosecution; Anytus, an honest and influential democrat who hated the Sophists and perhaps regarded Socrates as one of them, gave it weight and an air of respectability; Lycon was a rhetorician and contributed eloquence.
3. *a playwright*: the comic poet, Aristophanes, burlesqued Socrates in his comedy *The Clouds*, produced in 423, by representing him as a Sophist of the worst type – a quack scientist and rhetorician with neither religion nor morals. No doubt he chose Socrates simply as a perfect subject for caricature, and meant him no harm (the two men are quite friendly in the *Symposium*); but the play probably had a damaging effect.
4. *Socrates goes whirling round*: He appears suspended in a basket, because his mind works better in the upper air.
5. *Gorgias of Leontini* was a sceptic and a brilliant rhetorician who first visited Athens on a diplomatic mission in 427 and later settled there for some time. In the dialogue called after him Plato represents him as a well-meaning simple-minded elderly don who is no match for Socrates.
6. *Prodicus of Ceos* specialised in the study of synonyms and distinctions of meaning; his style is parodied in the Protagoras. He was a distinguished teacher and one of the best of the Sophists in spite of his pedantry.
7. *Hippias of Elis* was supposed to know something about everything, including the useful arts. It is unlikely that his knowledge was profound.
8. *Callias* is the host in the Protagoras. He was a great patron of Sophists, and ruined himself by this and other expensive habits.
9. *Evenus of Paros* was a rhetorician and poet (mentioned also in the Phaedo) who was staying at this time in Athens.
10. Delphi: The oracle of Apollo at Delphi was the supreme authority whose advice was sought on all kinds of subjects – religious, moral, political, and personal. The source of its information remains a

mystery; if it relied upon a secret service, the secret was efficiently kept. The only "natural" explanation of its reply about Socrates is that it was well aware of his true character and ideals and thoroughly approved of them.

11. *Chaerephon*: Little can be added to the account given here, except that he was one of the few democrats in Socrates' circle, and that he too appeared in the Clouds.
12. *the recent expulsion,* etc., refers to the events of 404, when the oligarchs, seizing power, murdered or drove out large numbers of their political opponents; these, under the leadership of Thrasybulus, presently gained a footing in Attica, defeated the oligarchs, and restored the democracy in the following year.
13. *his brother*: Chaerecrates.
14. *Dog!*: Such pseudo-oaths were not peculiar to Socrates, nor did he always avoid the name of a real deity. The practice was perhaps originally pious, but by this date had become humorous.
15. *pilgrimage* seems a legitimate equivalent for the literal "labours" (e.g. of Hercules), though the latter were mainly for the benefit of mankind.
16. *Council ... Assembly:* The Council (of 500 members) was the supreme administrative authority; the Assembly was open to all adult male citizens.
17. *sun and moon are gods*: The cult of the sun was prevalent in Greece, though it tended to be merged in the worship of Apollo. The moon (associated with Artemis and Hecate) was of especial importance in magic. The object of the question is to lead up to the doctrines of Anaxagoras.
18. *Anaxagoras of Clazomenae* (about 500-428 BC), one of the most original thinkers of the century, resided in Athens for thirty years. In 450, he was accused of impiety and collaboration with Persia, and condemned to death (?), but escaped with the help of Pericles, who was his very good friend, and retired to Lampsacus, where he died. The details of the story are disputed, but there is little doubt that the motives underlying his accusation were not religious or patriotic but political, and formed part of a campaign against Pericles and his advisers. Clearly Plato intends us to compare the circumstances of the two trials and to contrast their consequences. The only features of Anaxagoras' teaching that concern us are his astronomical views (that the sun and moon are fragments of the earth which have become white-hot by the rapidity of their movement) and his doctrine of

Mind (referred in the *Phaedo*).

19. *in the market-place*: Plato says "in the orchestra", that is, the flat circular space (in which the chorus dances) in front of the stage in the open-air Theatre. It would have been both vacant and accessible on most days of the year, and was therefore quite a suitable place for bookstalls.
20. *supernatural beings:* "daemons". The word has a vague connotation, but it is generally used of any being or agency that is more than human but not quite identifiably divine. The corresponding adjective often simply means "mysterious". It is used here with reference to Socrates' "warning voice".
21. *bastard children*: the heroes and demigods of mythology.
22. *son of Thetis*: Achilles. The passage, which Socrates partly paraphrases and partly quotes, is Iliad XViii. 94-106.
23. *Potidaea* in Chalcidice revolted from Athens in 432 and was reduced two years later. In the preliminary fighting Socrates saved the life of Alcibiades, as the latter relates in the *Symposium* (220 D).
24. *Amphipolis*: An Athenian colony at the mouth of the Strymon (Struma). The battle to which Socrates refers took place outside the walls in 422.
25. *Delium* in Boeotia was the scene of a heavy Athenian defeat in 424. According to Alcibiades in the passage quoted above, Socrates showed great gallantry.
26. *elected to the Council*: Appointment was actually by lot; but this and other technical details unimportant to the general sense (and in some cases tedious to explain) have been glossed over in the translation of this paragraph.
27. *the naval engagement:* The Athenian victory at Arginusae in 406. Public feeling ran very high at this negligence of the admirals (or generals – land and sea commands were not distinguished at Athens). Only eight were in fact implicated, two being absent from the battle.
28. *Round Chamber*: A building used as a Government office, normally by the executive of the Council.
29. *dreams*: e.g. the one described in the *Phaedo*, which is a dialogue by Plato, describing through the mouth of an eye-witness, the events and discussions of the last day in Socrates' life, and the manner of his death.
30. *Crito*: Socrates' closest friend, who gives his name to the dialogue that comes immediately after Apology, taking place in the State



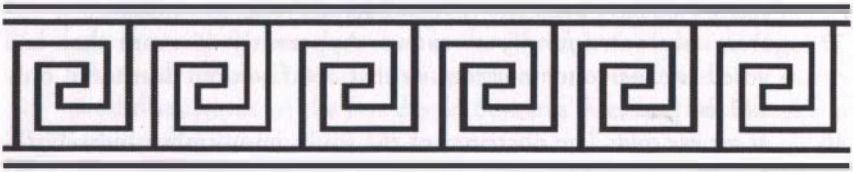
Greek warship

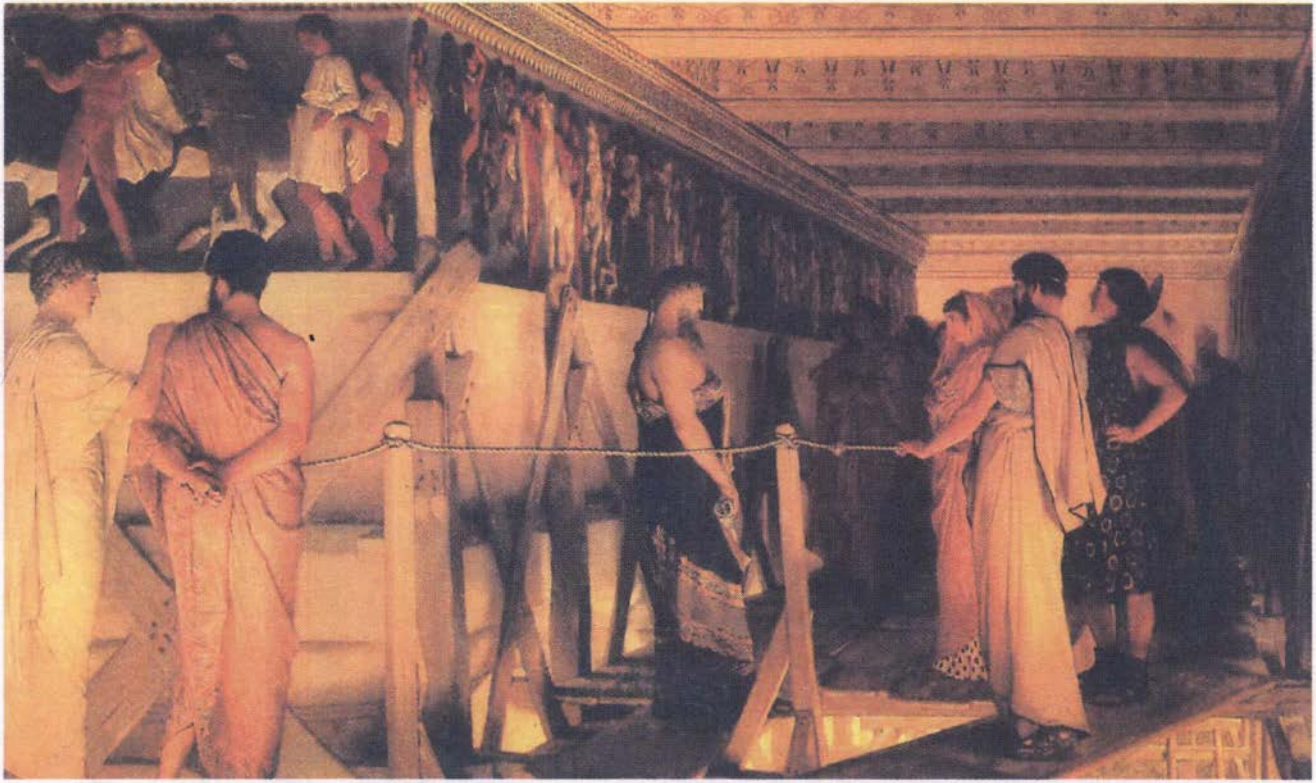
prison at Athens, where Socrates stayed for one month before his execution.

31. *Sphettus* and *Cephisia* were "demes" or parishes in Attica.
32. *from a tree or from a rock: Odyssey* XiX 163. This proverbial expression, implying "so you must have some parents" is used by Penelope in encouraging the disguised Odysseus to reveal his name and family.
33. *sons*: Lamprocles, Sophroniscus, and Menexenus. Unfortunately they did not take after their father.
34. *thirty votes*: Apparently 220 voted for and 280 against acquittal; but 30 is probably a round number.
35. *one-fifth of the votes*: Socrates pretends that each of the accusers has obtained one-third of the votes cast for the prosecution, so that Meletus has only 93 odd instead of 100. He must have enjoyed this brazen illogicality. The fine was 1,000 drachmae.
36. *free maintenance*: This was actually provided for distinguished citizens and public benefactors in the Prytaneum, a sort of State hotel.
37. *banishment*: No doubt this was exactly what most of his enemies desired.
38. *five pounds*: "One mina". According to Xenophon *Oeconomica* ii.3, this would have been one-fifth of Socrates' entire resources.
39. *those who voted for my execution*: Apparently 80 more than had voted for his condemnation, so that 360 favoured death and only 140 the fine.
40. *as we are told*: The doctrines of the soul's immortality and rebirth, and of purification by punishment in the underworld belong to Orphism, a primitive but in some ways remarkably enlightened

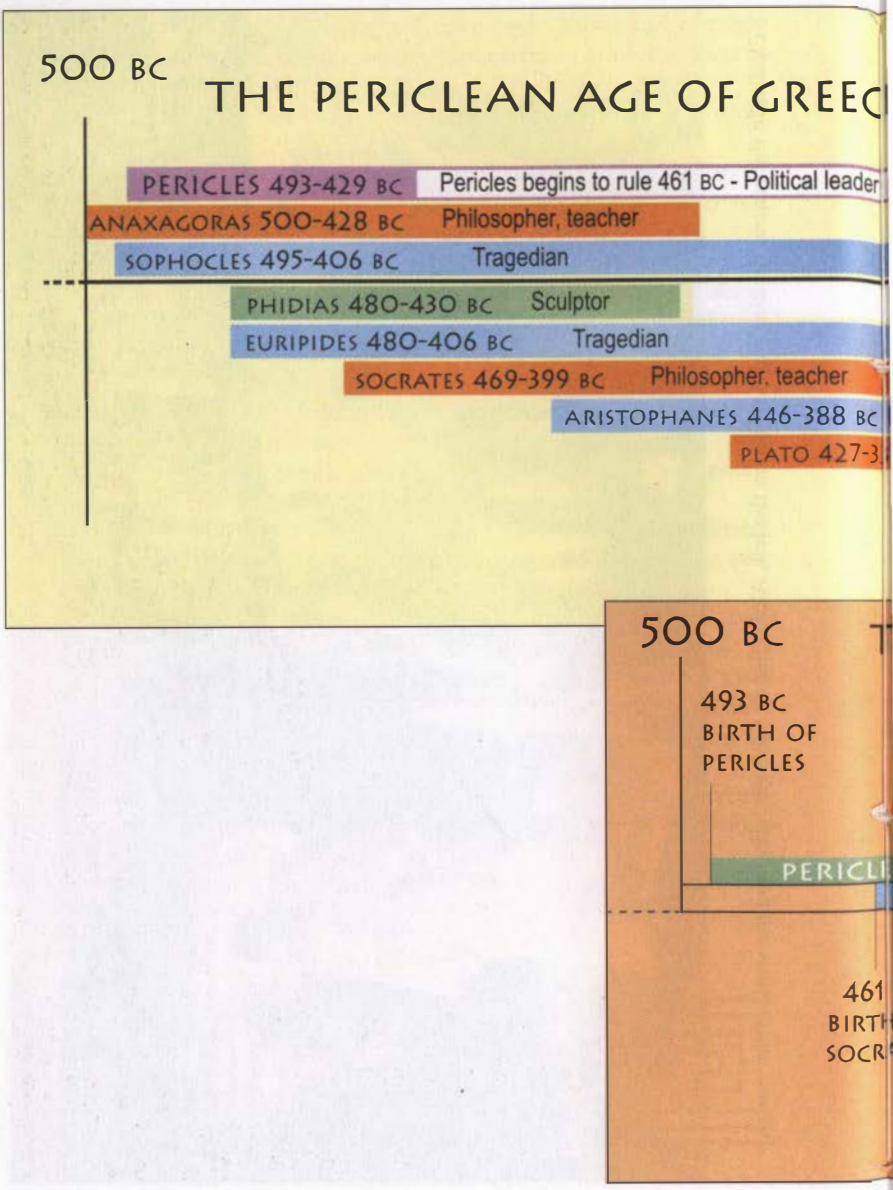
religion which perhaps came to Greece from Thrace and certainly inspired the "mystery cults" which were practiced in various parts of Greece, especially at Eleusis in Attica.

41. *The Great King*: The king of Persia, regarded as a type of worldly prosperity.
42. *Minos, Rhadamanthys*, and *Aeacus* were by tradition mortal sons of Zeus (the gods' king), and became judges in the underworld as a reward for their earthly justice and piety.
43. *Triptolemus* was the introducer of agriculture and had an important part in the cult of Demeter (goddess of the earth) at the Eleusinian Mysteries. He is not described elsewhere as a judge of the dead.
44. *Orpheus* is no doubt mentioned not as a singer and poet but as the founder of Orphism.
45. *Musaeus* was a bard like Orpheus, but his benefactions consisted in giving oracles and instruction for the curing of disease.
46. *Hesiod of Ascra* in Boeotia was the first didactic poet; he was generally ranked next after Homer in antiquity and merit.
47. *Palamedes* a Greek warrior in the Trojan War, exposed a discreditable trick on the part of Odysseus, who by forged evidence got him executed for treason (Virgil, *Aeneid* ii. 811f).
48. *Ajax* expected to be awarded the arms of Achilles, which were supposed to pass, after their owner's death, to the next bravest of the Greeks; but the generals Agamemnon and Menelaus awarded them to Odysseus. Ajax, in a fit of madness, killed some cattle in mistake for the persons who had wronged him, and later, recovering his senses, was so ashamed that he killed himself.
49. *Sisyphus* was a king of Corinth who was famous for his unscrupulous cleverness. Presumably it was his brains rather than his character that interested Socrates.





Phidias in the centre, Pericles and Aspasia on the left, Alcibiades on the right, admiring the work of the sculptor


500 BC
THE PERICLEAN AGE OF GREEC
PERICLES 493-429 BC
Pericles begins to rule 461 BC - Political leader
ANAXAGORAS 500-428 BC
Philosopher, teacher
SOPHOCLES 495-406 BC
Tragedian
PHIDIAS 480-430 BC
Sculptor
EURIPIDES 480-406 BC
Tragedian
SOCRATES 469-399 BC
Philosopher, teacher
ARISTOPHANES 446-388 BC
PLATO 427-3
500 BC
493 BC
BIRTH OF
PERICLES
PERICLI
461
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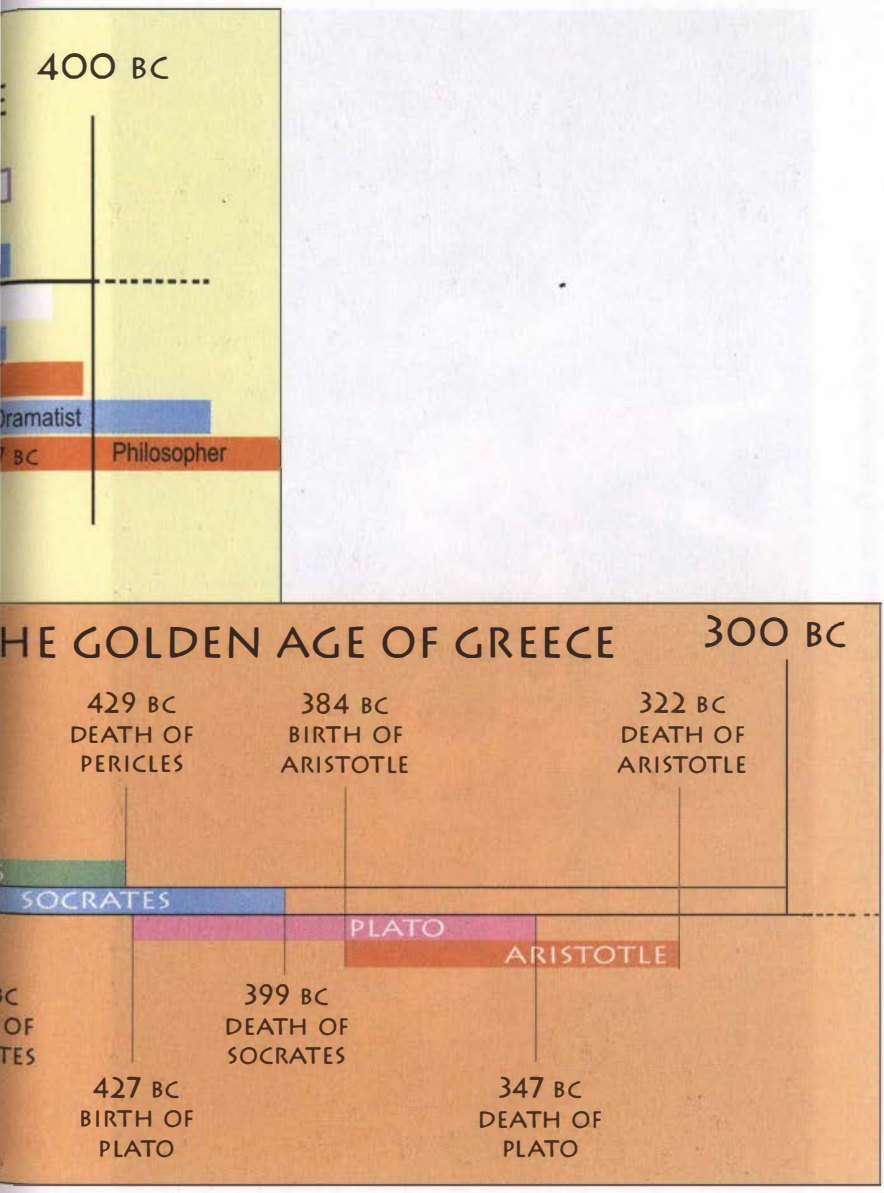

400 BC
Dramatist
BC
Philosopher
HE GOLDEN AGE OF GREECE
300 BC
429 BC
DEATH OF
PERICLES
384 BC
BIRTH OF
ARISTOTLE
322 BC
DEATH OF
ARISTOTLE
SOCRATES
PLATO
ARISTOTLE
399 BC
DEATH OF
SOCRATES
427 BC
BIRTH OF
PLATO
347 BC
DEATH OF
PLATO

The Death of Socrates by French painter Jean-Louis David (1748-1825)

Phaedo

Plato

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

PHAEDO: who is the narrator of the Dialogue to Echecrates of Phlius.
ECHECRATES
SOCRATES
APOLLODORUS
SIMMIAS
CEBES
CRITO
ATTENDANT OF THE PRISON

SCENE:

The Prison of Socrates

PLACE OF THE NARRATION:

Phlius

ECHECRATES. Were you yourself, Phaedo, in the prison with Socrates on the day when he drank the poison?

PHAEDO. Yes, Echecrates, I was.

ECHECRATES. I should so like to hear about his death. What did he say in his last hours? We were informed that he died by taking poison, but no one knew anything more; for no Phliasian ever goes to Athens now, and it is a long time since any stranger from Athens has found his way hither; so that we had no clear account.

PHAEDO. Did you not hear of the proceedings at the trial?

ECHECRATES. Yes; some one told us about the trial, and we could not understand why, having been condemned, he should have been put to death, not at the time, but long afterwards. What was the reason of this?

PHAEDO. An accident, Echecrates: the stern of the ship, which the Athenians send to Delos, happened to have been crowned on the day before he was tried.

ECHECRATES. What is this ship?

PHAEDO. It is the ship in which, according to Athenian tradition, Theseus went to Crete when he took with him the fourteen youths, and was the saviour of them and of himself. And they are said to have vowed to Apollo at the time, that if they were saved they would send a yearly mission to Delos. Now this custom still continues, and the whole period of the voyage to and from Delos, beginning when the priest of Apollo crowns the stern of the ship, is a holy season, during which the city is not allowed to be polluted by public executions; and when the vessel is detained by contrary winds, the time spent in going and returning is very

considerable. As I was saying, the ship was crowned on the day before the trial, and this was the reason why Socrates lay in prison and was not put to death until long after he was condemned.

ECHECRATES. What was the manner of his death, Phaedo? What was said or done? And which of his friends were with him? Or did the authorities forbid them to be present – so that he had no friends near him when he died?

PHAEDO. No; there were several of them with him.

ECHECRATES. If you have nothing to do, I wish that you would tell me what passed, as exactly as you can.

PHAEDO. I have nothing at all to do, and will try to gratify your wish. To be reminded of Socrates is always the greatest delight to me, whether I speak myself or hear another speak of him.

ECHECRATES. You will have listeners who are of the same mind with you, and I hope that you will be as exact as you can.

PHAEDO. I had a singular feeling at being in his company. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him, Echecrates; he died so fearlessly, and his words and bearing were so noble and gracious, that to me he appeared blessed. I thought that in going to the other world he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be happy, if any man ever was, when he arrived there; and therefore I did not pity him as might have seemed natural at such an hour. But I had not the pleasure, which I usually feel in philosophical discourse (for philosophy was the theme of which we spoke). I was pleased, but in the pleasure there was also a strange admixture of pain; for I reflected that he was soon to die, and this

double feeling was shared by us all; we were laughing and weeping by turns, especially the excitable Apollodorus? – you know the sort of man?

ECHECRATES. Yes.

PHAEDO. He was quite beside himself; and I and all of us were greatly moved.

ECHECRATES. Who were present?

PHAEDO. Of native Athenians there were, besides Apollodorus, Critobulus and his father Crito, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines, Antisthenes; likewise Ctesippus of the deme of Paeania, Menexenus, and some others; Plato, if I am not mistaken, was ill.

ECHECRATES. Were there any strangers?

PHAEDO. Yes, there were; Simmias the Theban, and Cebes, and Phaedondes; Euclid and Terpsion, who came from Megara.

ECHECRATES. And was Aristippus there, and Cleombrotus?

PHAEDO. No, they were said to be in Aegina.

ECHECRATES. Any one else?

PHAEDO. I think that these were nearly all.

ECHECRATES. Well, and what did you talk about?

PHAEDO. I will begin at the beginning, and endeavour to repeat the entire conversation. On the previous days we had been in the habit of assembling early in the morning at the court in which the trial took place, and which is not far

from the prison. There we used to wait talking with one another until the opening of the doors (for they were not opened very early); then we went in and generally passed the day with Socrates. On the last morning we assembled sooner than usual, having heard on the day before when we quitted the prison in the evening that the sacred ship had come from Delos; and so we arranged to meet very early at the accustomed place. On our arrival the jailer who answered the door, instead of admitting us, came out and told us to stay until he called us. 'For the Eleven,' he said, 'are now with Socrates; they are taking off his chains, and giving orders that he is to die to-day.' He soon returned and said that we might come in. On entering we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xanthippè, whom you know, sitting by him, and holding his child in her arms. When she saw us she uttered a cry and said, as women will: 'O Socrates, this is the last time that either you will converse with your friends, or they with you.' Socrates turned to Crito and said: 'Crito, let some one take her home.' Some of Crito's people accordingly led her away, crying out and beating herself. And when she was gone, Socrates, sitting up on the couch, bent and rubbed his leg, saying, as he was rubbing:

— How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they are never present to a man at the same instant, and yet he who pursues either is generally compelled to take the other; their bodies are two, but they are joined by a single head. And I cannot help thinking that if Aesop had remembered them, he would have made a fable about God trying to reconcile their strife, and how, when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows: as I know by my own experience now, when after the pain in my leg which was caused by the chain pleasure appears to succeed.....

And now, O my judges, I desire to prove to you that the real philosopher has reason to be of good cheer when he is about to die, and that after death he may hope to obtain the greatest good in the other world. And how this may be, Simmias and Cebes, I will endeavour to explain. For I deem that the true votary of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that he is always pursuing death and dying; and if this be so, and he has had the desire of death all his life long, why when his time comes should he repine at that which he has been always pursuing and desiring?

Simmias said laughingly: Though not in a laughing humour, you have made me laugh, Socrates; for I cannot help thinking that the many when they hear your words will say how truly you have described philosophers, and our people at home will likewise say that the life which philosophers desire is in reality death, and that they have found them out to be deserving of the death which they desire.

— And they are right, Simmias, in thinking so, with the exception of the words 'they have found them out;' for they have not found out either what is the nature of that death which the true philosopher deserves, or how he deserves or desires death. But enough of them: let us discuss the matter among ourselves. Do we believe that there is such a thing as death?

To be sure, replied Simmias.

— Is it not the separation of soul and body? And to be dead is the completion of this; when the soul exists in herself, and is released from the body and the body is released from the soul, what is this but death?

— Just so, he replied.

— There is another question, which will probably throw light

on our present enquiry if you and I can agree about it: Ought the philosopher to care about the pleasures – if they are to be called pleasures – of eating and drinking?

— Certainly not, answered Simmias.

— *And what about the pleasures of love – should he care for them?*

— By no means.

— *And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body, for example, the acquisition of costly raiment, or sandals, or other adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs? What do you say?*

— I should say that the true philosopher would despise them.

— *Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to get away from the body and to turn to the soul.*

— Quite true.

— *In matters of this sort philosophers, above all other men, may be observed in every sort of way to dissever the soul from the communion of the body.*

— Very true.

— *Whereas, Simmias, the rest of the world are of opinion that to him who has no sense of pleasure and no part in bodily pleasure, life is not worth having; and that he who is indifferent about them is as good as dead.*

— That is also true.

— *What again shall we say of the actual acquirement of knowledge? Is the body, if invited to share in the enquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not, as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? And yet, if even they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses? For you will allow that they are the best of them?*

— Certainly, he replied.

— *Then when does the soul attain truth? – for in attempting to consider anything in company with the body she is obviously deceived.*

— True.

— *Then must not true existence be revealed to her in thought, if at all?*

— Yes.

— *And thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her – neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure, – when she takes leave of the body, and has as little as possible to do with it, when she has no bodily sense or desire, but is aspiring after true being?*

— Certainly.

— *And in this the philosopher dishonours the body; his soul runs away from his body and desires to be alone and by herself?*

— That is true.

— Well, but there is another thing, Simmias: Is there or is there not an absolute justice?

— Assuredly there is.

— And an absolute beauty and absolute good?

— Of course.

— But did you ever behold any of them with your eyes?

— Certainly not.

— Or did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense? – and I speak not of these alone, but of absolute greatness, and health, and strength, and of the essence or true nature of everything. Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs? – or rather, is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of each thing which he considers?

— Certainly.

— And he attains to the purest knowledge of them who goes to each with the mind alone, not introducing or intruding in the act of thought, sight or any other sense together with reason, but with the very light of the mind in her own clearness searches into the very truth of each; he who has got rid, as far as he can, of eyes and ears and, so to speak, of the whole body, these being in his opinion distracting elements which when they infect the soul hinder her from acquiring truth and knowledge — who, if not he, is likely to attain to the knowledge of true being?

— What you say has a wonderful truth in it, Socrates, replied Simmias.

— And when real philosophers consider all these things, will they not be led to make a reflection, which they will express in words something like the following? 'Have we not found,' they will say, 'a path of thought which seems to bring us and our argument to the conclusion, that while we are in the body, and while the soul is infected with the evils of the body, our desire will not be satisfied? – and our desire is of the truth. For the body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food; and is liable also to diseases which overtake and impede us in the search after true being: it fills us full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies of all kinds, and endless foolery, and in fact, as men say, takes away from us the power of thinking at all. Whence come wars, and fightings, and factions? – whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? Wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and by reason of all these impediments we have no time to give to philosophy; and, last and worst of all, even if we are at leisure and betake ourselves to some speculation, the body is always breaking in upon us, causing turmoil and confusion in our enquiries, and so amazing us that we are prevented from seeing the truth. It has been proved to us by experience that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body – the soul in herself must behold things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers; not while we live, but after death; for if while in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things follows – either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul will be parted from the body and exist in herself alone. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the

body, and are not surfeited with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And thus having got rid of the foolishness of the body we shall be pure and hold converse with the pure, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere, which is no other than the light of truth.' For the impure are not permitted to approach the pure. These are the sort of words, Simmias, which the true lovers of knowledge cannot help saying to one another, and thinking. You would agree; would you not?

— Undoubtedly, Socrates.

— But, O my friend, if this be true, there is great reason to hope that, going whither I go, when I have come to the end of my journey, I shall attain that which has been the pursuit of my life. And therefore I go on my way rejoicing, and not I only, but every other man who believes that his mind has been made ready and that he is in a manner purified.

— Certainly, replied Simmias.

— And what is purification but the separation of the soul from the body, as I was saying before; the habit of the soul gathering and collecting herself into herself from all sides out of the body; the dwelling in her own place alone, as in another life, so also in this, as far as she can; the release of the soul from the chains of the body?

— Very true, he said.

— And this separation and release of the soul from the body is termed death?

— To be sure, he said.

— And the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking

to release the soul. Is not the separation and release of the soul from the body their especial study?

— That is true.

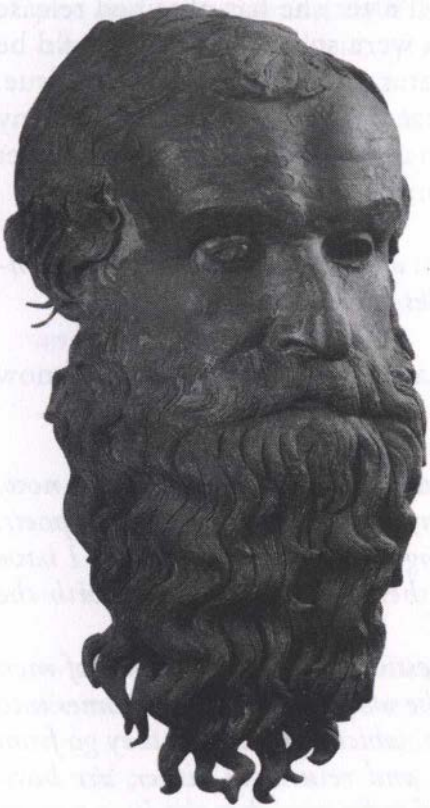
— And, as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet repining when it comes upon them.

— Clearly.

— And the true philosophers, Simmias, are always occupied in the practice of dying; wherefore also to them least of all men is death terrible. Look at the matter thus: – if they have been in every way the enemies of the body, and are wanting to be alone with the soul, when this desire of theirs is granted, how inconsistent would they be if they trembled and repined, instead of rejoicing at their departure to that place where, when they arrive, they hope to gain that which in life they desired – and this was wisdom – and at the same time to be rid of the company of their enemy. Many a man has been willing to go to the world below animated by the hope of seeing there an earthly love, or wife, or son, and conversing with them. And will he who is a true lover of wisdom, and is strongly persuaded in like manner that only in the world below he can worthily enjoy her, still repine at death? Will he not depart with joy? Surely he will, O my friend, if he be a true philosopher. For he will have a firm conviction that there, and there only, he can find wisdom in her purity. And if this be true, he would be very absurd, as I was saying, if he were afraid of death.

— He would indeed, replied Simmias.

— And when you see a man who is repining at the approach of death, is not his reluctance a sufficient proof that he is not a



A Greek philosopher, 5th century, bronze.

lover of wisdom, but a lover of the body, and probably at the same time a lover of either money or power, or both?

— Quite so, he replied. ...

Cebes answered — I agree, Socrates, in the greater part of what you say. But in what concerns the soul, men are apt to be incredulous; they fear that when she has left the body her place may be nowhere, and that on the very day of death she may perish and come to an end – immediately on her release from the body, issuing forth dispersed like smoke or air and in her flight vanishing away into nothingness. If she could

only be collected into herself after she has obtained release from the evils of which you were speaking, there would be good reason to hope, Socrates, that what you say is true. But surely it requires a great deal of argument and many proofs to show that when the man is dead his soul yet exists, and has any force or intelligence.

— *True, Cebes,* said Socrates; *and shall I suggest that we converse a little of the probabilities of these things?*

— I am sure, said Cebes, that I should greatly like to know your opinion about them.

— *I reckon,* said Socrates, *that no one who heard me now, not even if he were one of my old enemies, the Comic poets, could accuse me of idle talking about matters in which I have no concern: If you please, then, we will proceed with the enquiry.*
Suppose we consider the question whether the souls of men after death are or are not in the world below. There comes into my mind an ancient doctrine, which affirms that they go from hence into the other world, and returning hither, are born again from the dead. Now if it be true that the living come from the dead, then our souls must exist in the other world, for if not, how could they have been born again? And this would be conclusive, if there were any real evidence that the living are only born from the dead; but if this is not so, then other arguments will have to be adduced.

— Very true, replied Cebes.

— *Then let us consider the whole question, not in relation to man only, but in relation to animals generally, and to plants, and to everything of which there is generation, and the proof will be easier. Are not all things which have opposites generated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil,*

just and unjust – and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. And I want to show that in all opposites there is of necessity a similar alternation; I mean to say, for example, that anything, which becomes greater must become greater after being less.

— True.

— *And that which becomes less must have been once greater and then have become less.*

— Yes.

— *And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the swifter from the slower.*

— Very true.

— *And the worse is from the better, and the more just is from the more unjust.*

— Of course.

— *And is this true of all opposites? – and are we convinced that all of them are generated out of opposites?*

— Yes.

— *And in this universal opposition of all things, are there not also two intermediate processes which are ever going on, from one to the other opposite, and back again; where there is a greater and a less there is also an intermediate process of increase and diminution, and that which grows is said to wax, and that which decays to wane?*

— Yes, he said.

— And there are many other processes, such as division and composition, cooling and heating, which equally involve a passage into and out of one another. And this necessarily holds of all opposites, even though not always expressed in words – they are really generated out of one another, and there is a passing or process from one to the other of them?

— Very true, he replied.

— Well, and is there not an opposite of life, as sleep is the opposite of waking?

— True, he said.

— And what is it?

— Death, he answered.

— And these, if they are opposites, are generated the one from the other, and have their two intermediate processes also?

— Of course.

— Now, said Socrates, I will analyze one of the two pairs of opposites, which I have mentioned to you, and also its intermediate processes, and you shall analyze the other to me. One of them I term sleep, the other waking. The state of sleep is opposed to the state of waking, and out of sleeping waking is generated, and out of waking, sleeping; and the process of generation is in the one case falling asleep, and in the other waking up. Do you agree?

— I entirely agree.

— Then, suppose that you analyze life and death to me in the same manner. Is not death opposed to life?

— Yes.

— *And they are generated one from the other?*

— Yes.

— *What is generated from the living?*

— The dead.

— *And what from the dead?*

— I can only say in answer – the living.

— *Then the living, whether things or persons, Cebes, are generated from the dead?*

— That is clear, he replied.

— *Then the inference is that our souls exist in the world below?*

— That is true.

— *And one of the two processes or generations is visible – for surely the act of dying is visible?*

— Surely, he said.

— *What then is to be the result? Shall we exclude the opposite process? and shall we suppose nature to walk on one leg only? Must we not rather assign to death some corresponding process of generation?*

— Certainly, he replied.

— And what is that process?

— Return to life.

— And return to life, if there be such a thing, is the birth of the dead into the world of the living?

— Quite true.

— Then here is a new way by which we arrive at the conclusion that the living come from the dead, just as the dead come from the living; and this, if true, affords a most certain proof that the souls of the dead exist in some place out of which they come again.

— Yes, Socrates, he said; the conclusion seems to flow necessarily out of our previous admissions.

— And that these admissions were not unfair, Cebes, he said, may be shown, I think, as follows: If generation were in a straight line only, and there were no compensation or circle in nature, no turn or return of elements into their opposites, then you know that all things would at last have the same form and pass into the same state, and there would be no more generation of them.

— What do you mean? he said.

— A simple thing enough, which I will illustrate by the case of sleep, he replied. You know that if there were no alternation of sleeping and waking, the tale of the sleeping Endymion would in the end have no meaning, because all other things would be asleep too, and he would not be distinguishable from the rest. Or if there were composition only, and no division of substances, then the chaos of Anaxagoras would come again. And in like manner, my dear Cebes, if all things which partook of

life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, and did not come to life again, all would at last die, and nothing would be alive – what other result could there be? For if the living spring from any other things, and they too die, must not all things at last be swallowed up in death?

— There is no escape, Socrates, said Cebes; and to me your argument seems to be absolutely true.

— *Yes,* he said, *Cebes, it is and must be so, in my opinion; and we have not been deluded in making these admissions; but I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again, and that the living spring from the dead, and that the souls of the dead are in existence, and that the good souls have a better portion than the evil.*

— Cebes added: Your favourite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we have learned that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our soul had been in some place before existing in the form of man; here then is another proof of the soul's immortality.

— But tell me, Cebes, said Simmias, interposing, what arguments are urged in favour of this doctrine of recollection. I am not very sure at the moment that I remember them.

— One excellent proof, said Cebes, is afforded by questions. If you put a question to a person in a right way, he will give a true answer of himself, but how could he do this unless there were knowledge and right reason already in him? And this is most clearly shown when he is taken to a diagram or to anything of that sort.

— *But if, said Socrates, you are still incredulous, Simmias, I would ask you whether you may not agree with me when you*

look at the matter in another way; I mean, if you are still incredulous as to whether knowledge is recollection?

— Incredulous I am not, said Simmias; but I want to have this doctrine of recollection brought to my own recollection, and, from what Cebes has said, I am beginning to recollect and be convinced: but I should still like to hear what you were going to say.

— *This is what I would say,* he replied: *We should agree, if I am not mistaken, that what a man recollects he must have known at some previous time.*

— Very true.

— *And what is the nature of this knowledge or recollection? I mean to ask, Whether a person who, having seen or heard or in any way perceived anything, knows not only that, but has a conception of something else which is the subject, not of the same but of some other kind of knowledge, may not be fairly said to recollect that of which he has the conception?*

— What do you mean?

— *I mean what I may illustrate by the following instance: The knowledge of a lyre is not the same as the knowledge of a man?*

— True.

— *And yet what is the feeling of lovers when they recognize a lyre, or a garment, or anything else, which the beloved has been in the habit of using? Do not they, from knowing the lyre, form in the mind's eye an image of the youth to whom the lyre belongs? And this is recollection. In like manner any one who sees Simmias may remember Cebes; and there are endless*

examples of the same thing.

— Endless, indeed, replied Simmias.

— *And recollection is most commonly a process of recovering that, which has been already forgotten through time and inattention.*

— Very true, he said.

— *Well; and may you not also from seeing the picture of a horse or a lyre remember a man? and from the picture of Simmias, you may be led to remember Cebes;*

— True.

— *Or you may also be led to the recollection of Simmias himself?*

— Quite so.

— *And in all these cases, the recollection may be derived from things either like or unlike?*

— It may be.

— *And when the recollection is derived from like things, then another consideration is sure to arise, which is – whether the likeness in any degree falls short or not of that which is recollected?*

— Very true, he said.

— *And shall we proceed a step further, and affirm that there is such a thing as equality, not of one piece of wood or stone with another, but that, over and above this, there is absolute equality? Shall we say so?*

— Say so, yes, replied Simmias, and swear to it, with all the confidence in life.

— *And do we know the nature of this absolute essence?*

— To be sure, he said.

— *And whence did we obtain our knowledge? Did we not see equalities of material things, such as pieces of wood and stones, and gather from them the idea of an equality, which is different from them? For you will acknowledge that there is a difference. Or look at the matter in another way: Do not the same pieces of wood or stone appear at one time equal, and at another time unequal?*

— That is certain.

— *But are real equals ever unequal? Or is the idea of equality the same as of inequality?*

— Impossible, Socrates.

— *Then these (so-called) equals are not the same with the idea of equality?*

— I should say, clearly not, Socrates.

— *And yet from these equals, although differing from the idea of equality, you conceived and attained that idea?*

— Very true, he said.

— *Which might be like, or might be unlike them?*

— Yes.

— But that makes no difference: whenever from seeing one thing you conceived another, whether like or unlike, there must surely have been an act of recollection?

— Very true.

— But what would you say of equal portions of wood and stone, or other material equals? And what is the impression produced by them? Are they equals in the same sense in which absolute equality is equal? Or do they fall short of this perfect equality in a measure?

— Yes, he said, in a very great measure too.

— And must we not allow, that when I or any one, looking at any object, observes that the thing which he sees aims at being some other thing, but falls short of, and cannot be, that other thing, but is inferior, he who makes this observation must have had a previous knowledge of that to which the other, although similar, was inferior?

— Certainly.

— And has not this been our own case in the matter of equals and of absolute equality?

— Precisely.

— Then we must have known equality previously to the time when we first saw the material equals, and reflected that all these apparent equals strive to attain absolute equality, but fall short of it?

— Very true.

— And we recognize also that this absolute equality has only

been known, and can only be known, through the medium of sight or touch, or of some other of the senses, which are all alike in this respect?

— Yes, Socrates, as far as the argument is concerned, one of them is the same as the other.

— *From the senses then is derived the knowledge that all sensible things aim at an absolute equality of which they fall short?*

— Yes.

— *Then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality, or we could not have referred to that standard the equals which are derived from the senses? – for to that they all aspire, and of that they fall short.*

— No other inference can be drawn from the previous statements.

— *And did we not see and hear and have the use of our other senses as soon as we were born?*

— Certainly.

— *Then we must have acquired the knowledge of equality at some previous time?*

— Yes.

— *That is to say, before we were born, I suppose?*

— True.

— And if we acquired this knowledge before we were born, and were born having the use of it, then we also knew before we were born and at the instant of birth not only the equal or the greater or the less, but all other ideas; for we are not speaking only of equality, but of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness, and of all which we stamp with the name of essence in the dialectical process, both when we ask and when we answer questions. Of all this we may certainly affirm that we acquired the knowledge before birth?

— We may.

— But if, after having acquired, we have not forgotten what in each case we acquired, then we must always have come into life having knowledge, and shall always continue to know as long as life lasts – for knowing is the acquiring and retaining knowledge and not forgetting. Is not forgetting, Simmias, just the losing of knowledge?

— Quite true, Socrates.

— But if the knowledge, which we acquired before birth was lost by us at birth, and if afterwards by the use of the senses we recovered what we previously knew, will not the process, which we call learning be a recovering of the knowledge, which is natural to us, and may not this be rightly termed recollection?

— Very true.

— So much is clear – that when we perceive something, either by the help of sight, or hearing, or some other sense, from that perception we are able to obtain a notion of some other thing like or unlike which is associated with it but has been forgotten. Whence, as I was saying, one of two alternatives follows: either we had this knowledge at birth, and continued to know

through life; or, after birth, those who are said to learn only remember, and learning is simply recollection.

— Yes, that is quite true, Socrates.

— And which alternative, Simmias, do you prefer? Had we the knowledge at our birth, or did we recollect the things, which we knew previously to our birth?

— I cannot decide at the moment.

— At any rate you can decide whether he who has knowledge will or will not be able to render an account of his knowledge? What do you say?

— Certainly, he will.

— But do you think that every man is able to give an account of these very matters about which we are speaking?

— Would that they could, Socrates, but I rather fear that tomorrow, at this time, there will no longer be any one alive who is able to give an account of them such as ought to be given.

— Then you are not of opinion, Simmias, that all men know these things?

— Certainly not.

— They are in process of recollecting that which they learned before?

— Certainly.

— But when did our souls acquire this knowledge? – not since

we were born as men?

— Certainly not.

— *And therefore, previously?*

— Yes.

— *Then, Simmias, our souls must also have existed without bodies before they were in the form of man, and must have had intelligence.*

— Unless indeed you suppose, Socrates, that these notions are given us at the very moment of birth; for this is the only time which remains.

— *Yes, my friend, but if so, when do we lose them? – for they are not in us when we are born – that is admitted. Do we lose them at the moment of receiving them, or if not at what other time?*

— No, Socrates, I perceive that I was unconsciously talking nonsense.

— *Then may we not say, Simmias, that if, as we are always repeating, there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and an absolute essence of all things; and if to this, which is now discovered to have existed in our former state, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them, finding these ideas to be pre-existent and our inborn possession – then our souls must have had a prior existence, but if not, there would be no force in the argument? There is the same proof that these ideas must have existed before we were born, as that our souls existed before we were born; and if not the ideas, then not the souls.*

— Yes, Socrates; I am convinced that there is precisely the same necessity for the one as for the other; and the argument retreats successfully to the position that the existence of the soul before birth cannot be separated from the existence of the essence of which you speak. For there is nothing which to my mind is so patent as that beauty, goodness, and the other notions of which you were just now speaking, have a most real and absolute existence; and I am satisfied with the proof.

— *Well, but is Cebes equally satisfied? – for I must convince him too.*

— I think, said Simmias, that Cebes is satisfied: although he is the most incredulous of mortals, yet I believe that he is sufficiently convinced of the existence of the soul before birth. But that after death the soul will continue to exist is not yet proven even to my own satisfaction. I cannot get rid of the feeling of the many to which Cebes was referring – the feeling that when the man dies the soul will be dispersed, and that this may be the extinction of her. For admitting that she may have been born elsewhere, and framed out of other elements, and was in existence before entering the human body, why after having entered in and gone out again may she not herself be destroyed and come to an end?

— Very true, Simmias, said Cebes; about half of what was required has been proven; to wit, that our souls existed before we were born: that the soul will exist after death as well as before birth is the other half of which the proof is still wanting, and has to be supplied; when that is given the demonstration will be complete.

— *But that proof, Simmias and Cebes, has been already given,* said Socrates, *if you put the two arguments together – I mean*

this and the former one, in which we admitted that everything living is born of the dead. For if the soul exists before birth, and in coming to life and being born can be born only from death and dying, must she not after death continue to exist, since she has to be born again? – Surely the proof, which you desire has been already furnished.....

— We will do our best, said Crito. And in what way shall we bury you?

— *In any way that you like; but you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not run away from you.* Then he turned to us, and added with a smile: *I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body – and he asks, How shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavour to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed, – these words of mine, with which I was comforting you and myself, have had, as I perceive, no effect upon Crito. And therefore I want you to be surety for me to him now, as at the trial he was surety to the judges for me: but let the promise be of another sort; for he was surety for me to the judges that I would remain, and you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; and then he will suffer less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him; for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil. Be of good cheer then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that whatever is usual, and what you think best.*

When he had spoken these words, he arose and went into a chamber to bathe; Crito followed him and told us to wait.

So we remained behind, talking and thinking of the subject of discourse, and also of the greatness of our sorrow; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath his children were brought to him – (he had two young sons and an elder one); and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; then he dismissed them and returned to us.

Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out, he sat down with us again after his bath, but not much was said. Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, entered and stood by him, saying: To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me, when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison – indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are to blame. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must needs be – you know my errand. Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said: *I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid.* Then turning to us, he said,

— *How charming the man is: since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good to me as could be, and now see how generously he sorrows on my account. We must do as he says, Crito; and therefore let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared: if not, let the attendant prepare some.*

— Yet, said Crito, the sun is still upon the hill-tops, and I know that many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him, he has eaten and drunk, and enjoyed the society of his beloved; do not hurry

– there is time enough.

Socrates said — *Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in so acting, for they think that they will be gainers by the delay; but I am right in not following their example, for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later; I should only be ridiculous in my own eyes for sparing and saving a life which is already forfeit. Please then to do as I say, and not to refuse me.*

Crito made a sign to the servant, who was standing by; and he went out, and having been absent for some time, returned with the jailer carrying the cup of poison. Socrates said: *You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed.* The man answered: You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act. At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said: *What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?* The man answered: We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough. *I understand,* he said: *but I may and must ask the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world – even so – and so be it according to my prayer.* Then raising the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept, not for him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having to part from such a friend. Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up, and I followed; and at that moment,

Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud and passionate cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: *What is this strange outcry?* he said. *I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not misbehave in this way, for I have been told that a man should die in peace. Be quiet then, and have patience.* When we heard his words we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said, No; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: *When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end.* He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said – they were his last words – he said: *Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?* The debt shall be paid, said Crito; is there anything else? There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his` time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best.

Translation by Benjamin Jowett (abridged)

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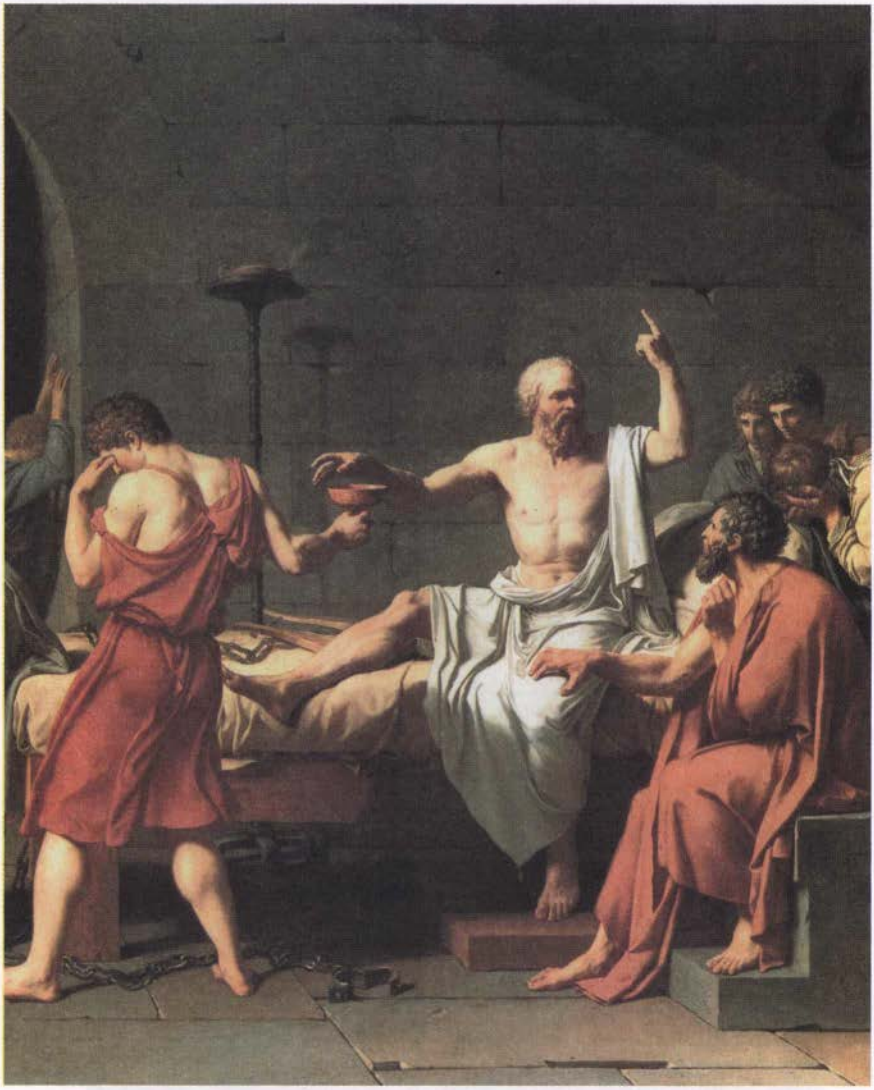
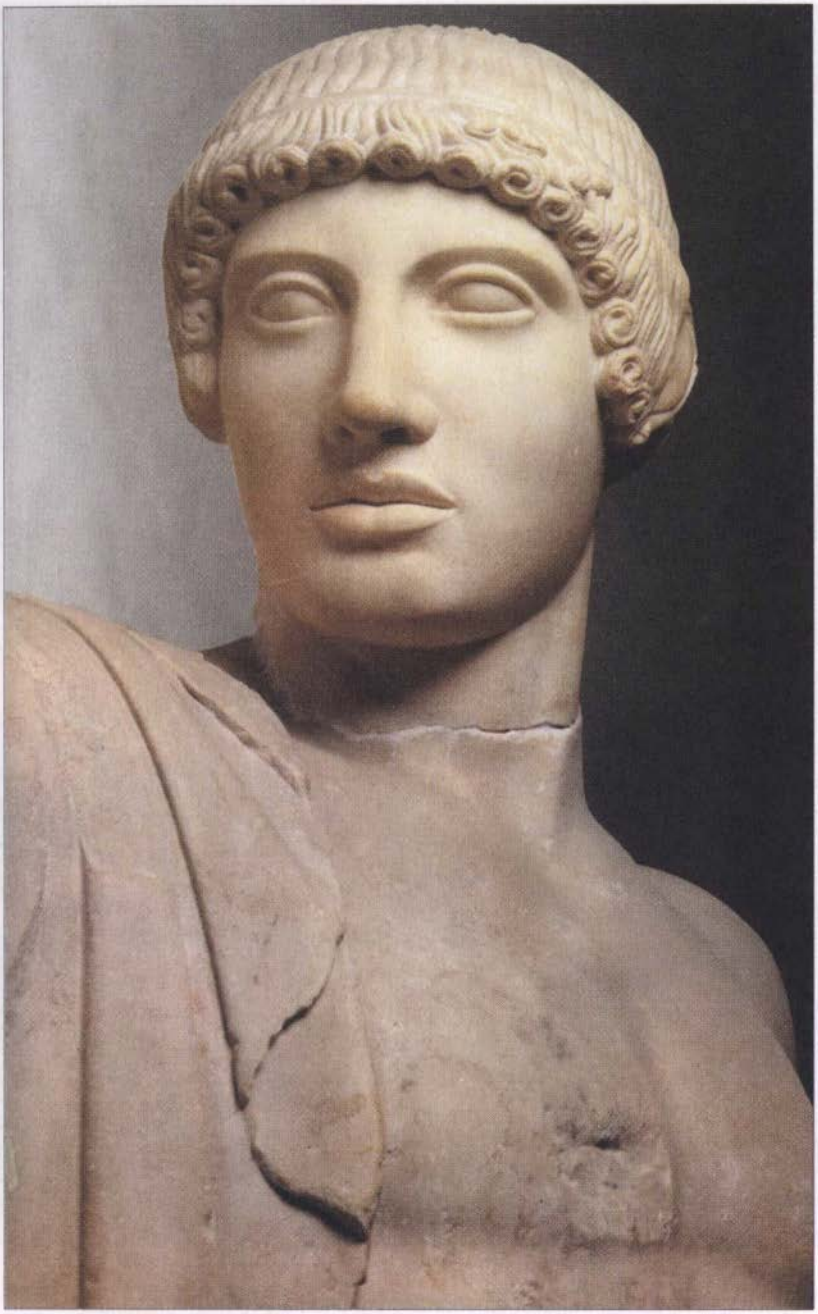
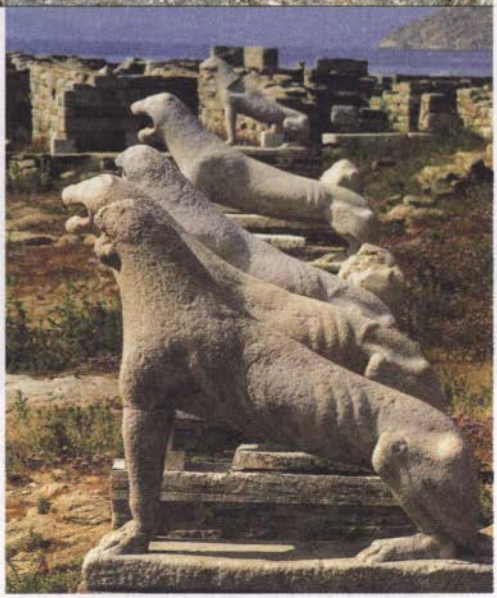


The Death of Socrates by David (detail)





Top: The theatre at Dodona and the mountains of Epirus in the background. In Dodona, Zeus' oracle spoke through the rustling leaves of an age-old sacred oak tree.

Right: at Delos, the sacred island of Apollo, a processional way, 7th century BC

Left page: Apollo (Temple of Zeus, Olympia, c.470 BC)

Plato among his students, Pompeian mosaic, National Museum, Naples

Appendix I

A Synoptic Essay on Socrates

It (the true soul) is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic.

— Sri Aurobindo

One of the greatest of the Greeks was Socrates who is known as the father of Philosophy. His early life is not much known but he must have lived a disciplined life right from early boyhood. We are told that he had a great power of endurance and could bear extreme cold and heat. He was a sturdy soldier and had shown remarkable skill and valour in several battles.

It is, however, said that he was very ugly; he had a snub nose and a considerable belly. He was always dressed in shabby old clothes and went barefoot everywhere.

But he was a profound thinker and philosopher. Even when he went to serve in the army, he used to spend his time in thinking. One morning, while he was on military duty, he was thinking about something. He thought and thought over some problem, which he could not solve. He did not give up and continued thinking from early dawn until noon – he stood fixed in thought; at noon when attention was drawn to him,

all the people began to wonder at him. At last, after supper some people brought out their mats and slept in the open air to watch him and see whether he would stand all night. There he stood until the following morning; and with the return of light he offered up a prayer to the sun, and went his way.

At another time, Socrates and his friend Aristodemus went together to a banquet, but on the way Socrates went into a trance and dropped behind. When Aristodemus arrived at the feast, he was asked by the host: "What have you done with Socrates?" Aristodemus was astonished to find that Socrates was not with him. In those days rich people used to have slaves, so a slave was sent to look for him. The slave returned and said, "There he is fixed, and when I called him, he would not stir. Those who know him well explained that he has a way of stopping anywhere and losing himself without any reason." Socrates came when the feast was half over.

Socrates was a great seeker of truth and he had developed a method of enquiry, which has come to be known as the Socratic method. This method, which is also called the dialectic, consists of arriving at conclusions by question and answer. Socrates used to begin an enquiry by saying that he knew nothing or very little about the subject of enquiry. Then he would invite certain notions or definitions of the subject under enquiry; this would be followed by his presenting some difficulties in accepting those notions or definitions; he would then suggest some modifications or present some new hypothesis followed by fresh discussions. Quite often the discussions would end in stimulating questions instead of arriving at conclusions. But when he would arrive at conclusions, it would be only after examining the subject freely and from as many points of view as possible.

This method seems to have been practised by Zeno of Elea, a disciple of Parmenides. For, if we read Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*, we find that Zeno uses the same kind of dialectic as Socrates. But there is no doubt that Socrates developed this method and, through Plato, it has determined to a large extent

the form of subsequent philosophy.

There is a fundamental difference between science and philosophy; science seeks facts and the laws governing them, while philosophy attempts to interpret and evaluate the facts from the point of view of the whole. Evidently, the Socratic method is not the scientific method; for it presupposes the prior existence of notions or definitions about the subject under enquiry; it does not arrive at new facts. What the method attempts to do is to examine the given facts and notions from various points of view, to clarify them and to give them a coherent form. This is the philosophical method. For although in philosophy nothing is to be taken for granted, it cannot and does not originate in vacuum; there must already be some glimpse of light in the human mind which would initiate philosophical reflection. This glimpse may be either in the form of a personal experience or in the form of a Word or, to use the Indian terminology, *sruti*, heard from the lips of the man of experience or realisation. In many ways, therefore, the Socratic method and the Indian philosophical method are similar.

Socrates used to go to the market and ask questions to the passer-bys. But his questions were so deep that many young people found in him a great teacher. He had, therefore, gathered around him a band of young people who used to go to him for learning. One of these young men was Plato, his chief disciple and one of the greatest philosophers of the world.

Socrates had a friend whose name was Alcibiades. Once he went to the oracle of Delphi, whom he asked if there was any one wiser than Socrates. The oracle said that there was none. On hearing this, Alcibiades was very pleased and told Socrates what the oracle had spoken to him. But when Socrates heard this, he was greatly puzzled. He thought that he knew nothing and yet he could not believe that the god Apollo could be wrong. He, therefore, went about among those people who were famous for their wisdom. First he went to a politician who was thought to be wise by many and regarded himself

wiser still. But Socrates found out that he had no wisdom. He then went to poets and asked them to explain their poems. But they could not. Then he knew that poets do not write by wisdom but only by genius and inspiration. Then he went to the artisans, but found that they too were not wise. Finally he concluded: "God alone is wise; the wisdom of man is worth little or nothing. I am called the wisest among men; but that is not because I have wisdom. Others too have no wisdom and yet think they have it, whereas I who have no wisdom know that I do not have it. This is the truth of the oracle."

But during this enquiry, Socrates showed the people whom he interviewed their ignorance and this embittered many. Already many elderly philosophers and politicians of Athens were afraid of the great influence that Socrates wielded over young people. They, therefore, brought a charge against him. They said: "Socrates is an evil doer and a curious person, searching into things under the earth and above the heaven; and making the worse appear the better, and teaching all this to others." They held that Socrates was guilty of not worshipping the gods of the State and inventing new gods. They further said that he was guilty of corrupting the young by teaching them wrong things.

In his dialogue *Apology*, Plato has described the trial of Socrates. Socrates defended himself but his accusers were not open to reason. He was, therefore, sentenced to death. In those times, it was the custom that the wife and children of the accused would come to the court, they would beg of the judges to lessen the punishment. But Socrates was not afraid of death and he was sure within himself that he was not guilty. He, therefore, prevented his wife and children from coming to the court for pleading. On the contrary, he said: "Those of us who think death is an evil are in error.... For death is either a dreamless sleep or the soul migrates to another world. In the next world, I will converse with Hesiod and Homer and in that world they do not put men to death for asking questions." And then he added: "The hour of departure has come, and we

go our way – I to die, and you to live. Which is better God alone knows."

Socrates was cheerful up to the last minute of his life. When he was given hemlock to drink he took it without any complaint or sorrow. Within a few minutes, his limbs became cold and thus ended the great life of Socrates.

Socratic doctrine: "Virtue is Knowledge"

Among the many views of Socrates, his doctrine of 'Virtue Is Knowledge' is perhaps the most important. This doctrine can be interpreted in two ways according as we attach different meanings to the word 'Virtue' and 'Knowledge'. We shall deal with them one after the other.

I

Traditionally, it is held that the ethical problem is double – first, the problem of knowing what is right and, second, the problem of doing what is known to be right. But, according to the first interpretation, Socrates identifies Knowledge, the first problem, with Virtue, the second problem. According to Socrates, it is maintained, knowing and doing cannot be separated. If a person knows a thing to be right, he cannot but do it. Or, in other words, a person cannot voluntarily do wrong.

Knowledge, in this view, means the knowledge of what is good and the knowledge is the intellectual apprehension. And by virtue is meant any good deed of an agent who has apprehended it to be good.

The plausibility of this interpretation depends upon the two dialogues *Charmides* and *Laches*, in which the Socratic doctrine is expounded to a certain extent. In *Laches*, Socrates says in effect that it is not the case that the brave man is never afraid, but inspite of fear he advances, rushes the slopes and captures the enemy's weapons. Why does he? Because he is afraid of certain things even more than of the weapons – such

things as the doing of what is disgraceful, of feeling shame, of the reputation for cowardice, of betraying one's comrades. What then is the difference between a coward and a brave man? The difference is that while the brave man knows what it is that is really to be afraid of, the coward does not. Hence, the knowledge of the right makes the former courageous.

The argument in *Charmides* is that it is the knowledge of the mean between extreme indulgence and extreme asceticism that makes a man temperate or sober. These two dialogues give a clue; it is said as to what meaning is attached by Socrates to the word 'Knowledge'. Here there is no reference to the knowledge of the whole reality or of the Highest Good; it is therefore not mystic or intuitive knowledge, which is an attribute of spiritual experience. Knowledge is, therefore, concluded to be intellectual apprehension of the right in a given particular situation.

The Socratic doctrine thus interpreted is liable to obvious objection. First, the doctrine can be disproved by an appeal to actual facts. Actual facts tell us that any good action presupposes the knowledge on the part of the agent of what is good, but not vice-versa, that is to say, knowledge of what is good is not always followed by a good action. Drunkards, for instance, know the evil consequences of drinking and know the value of sobriety, and yet they are not able to resist the temptation to drink. St. Augustine, when he was a boy, knew that stealing was a sin in the sight of God and yet he used to steal apples from an orchard. He used to repent for the act, used to weep and cry over it and still could not be free from the vice for many years. How, on the Socratic doctrine, are we to explain this fact?

Secondly, it follows that a good deed is a result of the knowledge of what is good as well as the *will* to do what is apprehended to be good. It may, therefore, be argued, that while Socrates recognizes the problem of knowledge, he forgets to recognize the problem of volition.

But it may be held that the traditional interpretation of the

doctrine does not do full justice to it. The account of virtue given by Socrates and the stress put upon the state of freedom in doing a good action are not considered fully. Moreover, if we consider the philosophy of Socrates as a whole, we may come to doubt whether the connotation of the word 'knowledge' should be restricted to mere intellectual apprehension.

We are thus led to a different approach to the doctrine.

II

There are two peculiarities of the Socratic virtue. First, according to Socrates, virtue is not an art. It is not an outward accomplishment. Art can be used in a good way as well as in a bad way. A doctor can cure as well as murder a patient with his knife. But for a doctor, who is good as a man also, there is only one way open and it is to cure. A virtuous man can and must do only what is good. He is too free to have alternatives.

Secondly, there is, according to Socrates, unity of virtue. A virtuous person is one who has developed all the virtues and harmonized them in such a manner that they make a unity among themselves. Whatever action springs from such a person is always good. Corresponding to this unity of virtue, there is the Socratic view of the unitary knowledge, the knowledge of the Good, which is not piecemeal or particular but a universal and unified vision of the Highest Reality.

Moreover, we have to note the Socratic doctrine of Freedom, which comes close to the Hindu idea of *Moksha* or Liberation. Such liberation is obtained by freeing oneself from the bonds of spiritual blindness, which is the cause of all evil. The state of liberation is the state of illumination spoken of as Knowledge by Socrates. Both in Socrates and Plato, there is a distinction between opinion and Knowledge; opinion is an apprehension of the particular that is partly real and partly unreal, whereas Knowledge is the comprehension of the universal, which is wholly real. It is the knowledge, which according

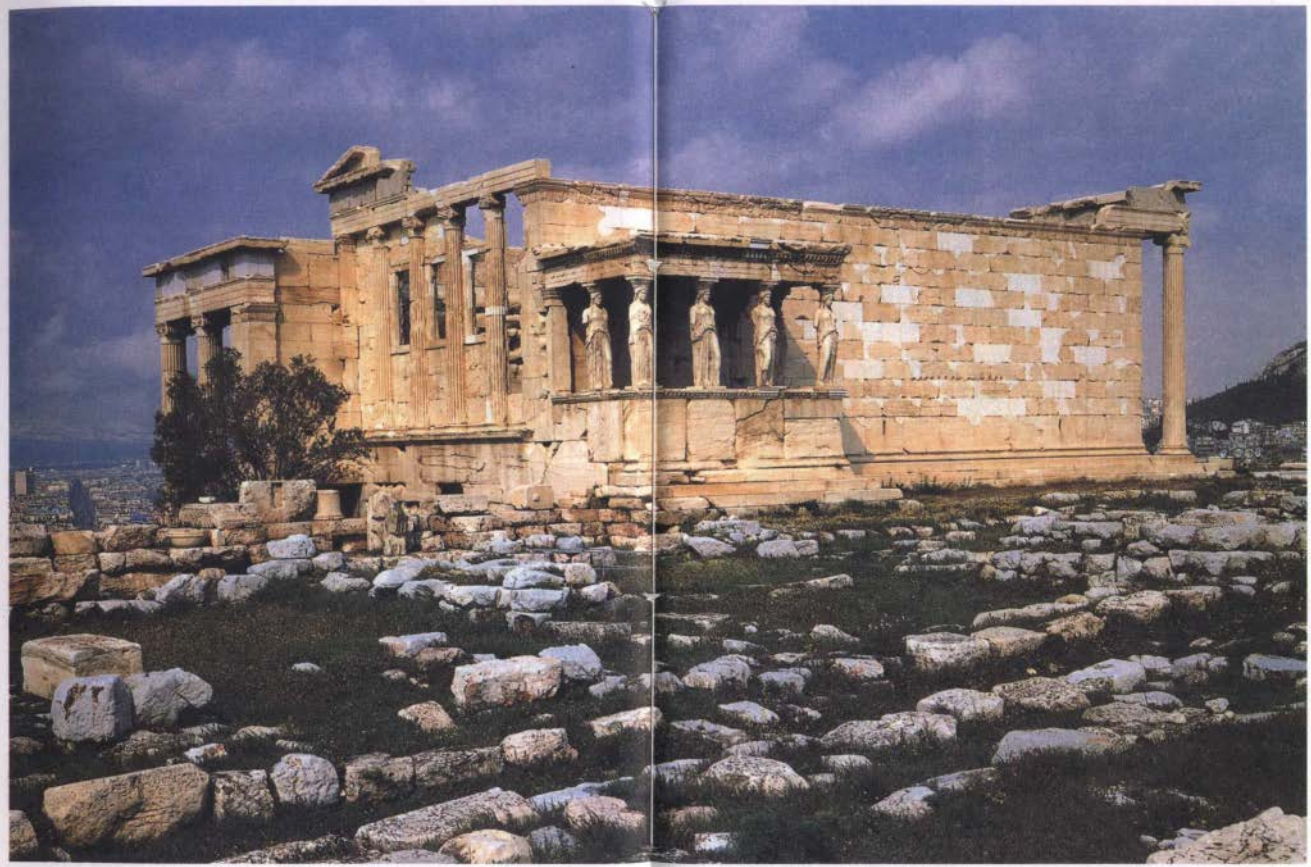
to Socrates, liberates man from the bonds of ignorance and evil.

What in effect have we arrived at? Virtue is not this virtue or that virtue and knowledge is not the apprehension of a particular good. What Socrates seems to be stating is that there is a state of consciousness where there is a totality of Knowledge, which manifests spontaneously in the forms of various actions. Indeed, this state does not belong to the moral plane; for in the moral plane we cannot speak of having attained to the totality of Knowledge, which is a unity of virtues. There the state of IS is always contrasted with WHAT OUGHT TO BE. This contrast ceases when the *Summum Bonum* or the Highest Good is attained in the state of spiritual illumination. Indeed, even in the spiritual field, there are degrees and progression; but the essential knowledge is there at every stage, which prevents evil in Will. With reference to the spiritual man therefore we can say: Virtue is Knowledge.

We have to remember that although Socrates initiated the rational movement in Western Philosophy through his method of dialectic, he was essentially a mystic. As we saw, he used to go into a state of trance quite frequently and he is reported to have been guided by his Daemon, the inner light and guide. To such a man, indeed, no given action is good unless it is a manifestation of the integrating experience, which is also the true knowledge. In the *Republic* of Plato, when we read the myth of the den,[1] where Plato describes the way by which the Highest Good is realized, – what we get is the symbolic description of spiritual experience. That realization is not intellectual apprehension, but that in which cognition,[2] affection[3] and conation[4] are fused together and transcended. It is, then, we may conclude, that knowledge obtained on this transcendental level that is referred to by Socrates in his doctrine 'Virtue is Knowledge'.

Notes and References

1. **Myth of the den**: It is a part of the famous dialogue *The Republic* by Plato. In this allegory, he brings to light the difference between what men think of as real, but, which is, in fact, an illusion and that, which is the real Reality. In this he likens human beings as prisoners who have been tied up in a cave since their childhood in such a manner that they cannot even move their head. There is a fire behind them, which they cannot see. There are puppeteers who use objects to cast shadows on the wall of the cave in front of the prisoners, which they believe to be real. And then, one of them is freed and forced to turn around and see that the shadows were an illusion and the real fire is behind him. He is then, forced to leave the cave and go outside. He shrinks at first, for the daylight is too much for him, and instead, he looks only at shadows cast by objects and men. He then looks at the reflection of things in water, then he ventures to look at the objects themselves. Subsequently, he looks at the stars and moon at night when the light of the sun is absent. At last, he looks at the sun and finds that the sun is the source of everything – the seasons, day and night, and in a sense, of everything; even that which the prisoners see in the cave. He then goes back in the cave, for he wants to share his knowledge with his fellow men. At first when he enters the cave, he finds it difficult to see because he is no more used to the darkness. In fact he is less adept at looking at things in the cave as compared to his fellow men who think that his visit to the outside world has been detrimental to his sight and understanding. When he, therefore, tries to tell them about the real reality, they do not believe him, and think that he is wrong. And if he were to ask them to leave the cave and come out, they would probably kill him. He likens the freed man to a philosopher, who has come to know the difference between illusion and real Reality.
2. **Cognition**: the psychological operation of the human understanding, by which objects are perceived and cognised.
3. **Affection**: the operation of the experience that is incited by feeling.
4. **Conation**: the operation of human consciousness, which is marked by volition or will. Conation, therefore, is what we normally call action.



A FEW DATES

478-431 BC	— Age of Athenian domination in Greece.
469 BC	— Birth of Socrates at Athens.
431-404 BC	— Peloponnesian war (between Greek cities, but mostly Athens and Sparta). Socrates earns a good reputation as a soldier in several battles.
427 BC	— Birth of Plato.
405 BC	— As a member of the ruling "Council of 500", Socrates shows great courage in opposing alone the condemnation to death of ten generals by a collective verdict, which he considered unconstitutional.
404 BC	— The Oligarchs seize power and establish a "Council of thirty". Socrates refuses to collaborate to the execution of unjust orders from the Oligarchs.
403 BC	— Restoration of democracy at Athens.
399 BC	— Socrates is judged and condemned. He refuses a possibility of escape and is executed.
347 BC	— Death of Plato.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Appendix II

Trial of Socrates

In Athens, the jury system was introduced simultaneously with Athenian democracy in 590 BC. A council called Areopagus consisting of elected aristocrats, ran both the government as well as the court.

Pericles and his predecessor Aphialtes, had accomplished one of the greatest reforms in the judicial system – that of transference of the judicial powers from this council of aristocrats, to the heliaea, a law council consisting of 6000 jurors, annually drawn by lots from the citizen's register. Only male citizens over thirty years of age were permitted to volunteer for jury duty. Women and slaves as well as alien residents were not permitted. These 6000 jurors were divided into 10 panels of roughly 500 jurors each. Jury duty was voluntary and each juror served for a year at a time. Pericles also began the practice of a fee of three obols for a day of jury duty. Athens employed panels ranging from 500 to as many as 1500 jurors, depending on the nature of the case. Using a large number of jurors prevented bribery and the panel before which a case was to be tried was decided by lot at the last minute to reduce corruption. All jurors swore an oath by the gods Zeus, Apollo and Demeter:

"I will cast my vote in consonance with the laws and decrees passed by the Assembly and by the council, but, if there is no law, in consonance with my sense of what is most just, without favour or enmity. I will vote only on the matters raised in the charge, and I will listen impartially to the accusers and defenders alike."

During the time of Socrates there was no public prosecutor; the citizens could accuse offenders in a public place and issue summons to appear in court before the legal magistrate. Melitus delivered an oral summons to Socrates in the presence of witnesses, which required him to appear before the legal magistrate in the Royal Stoa, a building in the city center.

The charge made by Melitus against Socrates was that of impiety and corruption of youth. After hearing both parties, the magistrate determined whether this charge was permissible under Athenian law. He then set a date for the preliminary hearing, which was made public so that citizens of Athens, if interested, could be present for the hearing.

The hearing took place in the Royal Stoa. It can be divided into two phases – the guilt phase in which the guilt is either established or the defendant is acquitted. It commenced with the reading of the formal charges being read out by a herald after which the prosecution consisting of Melitus, Anytus and Lycon got three hours measured by a water clock to make their arguments to prove Socrates guilty of corrupting the youth and impeity.

Following the prosecutions case, Socrates received three hours to answer their charges. After he had spoken, the herald asked the jurors to decide and announce their decision. Jurors had to decide their verdict of guilt or non-guilt on the spot, by their own discretion and interpretation of the law, without any dialogue or influence of co-jurors. They voted through a ballot system, in which a majority vote was necessary for conviction. In the case of Socrates, 280 jurors found him guilty and 220 declared him innocent – a relatively close vote.

The second phase is one, in which, in case the defendant is found guilty, his punishment is evaluated. Both the defendant and the accuser propose punishment, which they deem fit for the crime committed and the jurors decide between the two options. Punishments can range from loss of civil rights, fines, forfeit of property, exile, imprisonment and death. In case of Socrates, the accusers proposed the death penalty by hemlock

poisoning and Socrates suggested, instead of a punishment, a reward of free meals at the city center or at the most, a token fine of one mina of silver. This time however 360 jurors voted for the death penalty and 180 voted against it – a larger margin voted against Socrates than while convicting him as guilty.

It appears that they found his suggestion for his proposed punishment insulting and therefore turned against him. Also, it was a practice in those days for the wife and children to plead before the jurors, but Socrates forbade such emotional display. Their presence might have helped to endear him to the jurors.

It seems rather intriguing that a state such as Athens, so fiercely democratic and champion of liberty and freedom should deem it fit to execute a seventy-year-old philosopher. Let us look at the picture from both the points of view. Socratic philosophy gave a higher place to knowledge than opinion. For example when one wants a pair of shoes, one goes to a shoemaker who has the expertise and the knowledge of making shoes. Similarly, if one wants good governance for the state one should entrust those who have the intelligence and the knowledge required to carry out such a task. Socrates, therefore, recommended that governance should be carried out by enlightened leaders since they had the knowledge for such a task and disapproved of the existing democratic system of governance in which lots are drawn from the register of citizens and rulers are chosen not by their ability but by chance instead. As Socrates says in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, "It is absurd to choose magistrates by lot where no one would dream of drawing lots for a pilot, a mason, a flute-player, or any craftsman at all, though the shortcomings of such men are far less harmful than those that disorder our government." It is obvious that the citizens of Athens felt resentful of Socrates' view, as it would rob them of their rights to rule the state. And we will see how future events in Athens conspired to further fuel their resentment towards Socrates on this account.

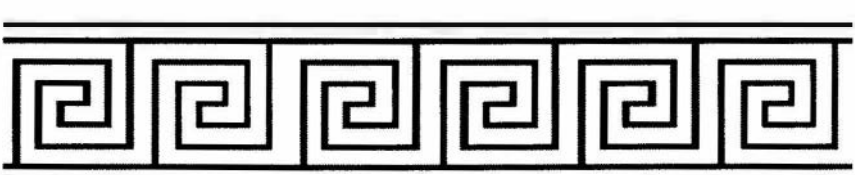
Having recommended that enlightened leaders were fit to rule, the two examples of such a rule that Athens witnessed were so horrifying that one can understand the disapproval of the Athenians towards the teachings of Socrates. The fact that Alcibiades, who overthrew the democracy of Athens and established the dictatorship of the Four Hundred in 411 BC and earlier had turned traitor to Athens by siding with Sparta, and Critias, the leader of the Thirty Tyrants who wreaked havoc on Athenians and went on a killing binge in 404 BC, were his erstwhile pupils, inflamed the already resentful citizens of Athens further against Socrates and put the final stamp of conviction that his teachings were, indeed, a bad influence upon the youth of Athens.

It was also held against him that when Critias asked Socrates to bring before him Leon of Salamis so that he could be executed, although Socrates declined to carry out such a task as it was against his duty towards Athens, he neither tried to stop the violence nor did he warn Leon of the impending danger. He simply returned home. This behavior of Socrates seems to have been taken as indifference on the part of Socrates towards his fellow Athenians.

Socrates often spoke of an inner spirit that guided him and commanded him to devote himself to the discovery of True Knowledge. In fact, he would often go into a trance. When asked about the gods, he only had one answer, and that was that one knows nothing of the gods, but he further clarified that one should worship the gods according to the law of one's country. In fact he himself referred to the oracle at Delphi, and often recommended others to take the advice given by it. However, he believed and was vocal about his belief that apart from the existence of the gods, there existed a faculty in man as well – his intelligence – that was capable of perceiving True Knowledge and the ideas of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Religion, as existed in those times was largely limited to dogmas and prescriptions, which did not easily permit or encourage a free enquiry by people, and consequently, everything was

referred to the gods, without the use of the individual intelligence to arrive at conclusions with regard to matters of morality and ethics. There is a dialogue called *Euthypro* by Plato in which Socrates argues that the good is not good because the gods approve of it, but that the gods approve of it because it is good. It is obvious that the orthodox would find him a threat because, as Will Durant says in the *Life of Greece*, Socrates dared 'to subject every rule to the scrutiny of reason' and encouraged people to determine for themselves, individually, matters relating to ethics and morality, which hitherto had been restricted to the domain of the gods and men simply followed the doctrines without question. And hence, came the accusation of impiety against him.

The opinion of fellowmen often tends to be myopic, as was the case of the Athenians with regard to Socrates and his beliefs and teachings. But, to be fair to them, they were influenced by what appeared to be the immediate consequences of Socratic thought and were not around to see his philosophy stand the test of time. Whatever may have been the view of his fellowmen, the passage of two thousand years has widened the vision of people and their view has become more holistic, capable of seeing the history of mankind and its intellectual development from that point forward to where it stands today. And that curve suggests that Western philosophy took birth with Socrates and his reasoning – which, therefore, could not have been detrimental to the youth of those days.



Fragment of pottery on which an Athenian citizen could scratch the name of the man he was voting to *ostracize*, that is to say, to send into exile.

Appendix III

A Detailed Chronology

490 BC — The 1st Persian war, the Persian army led by Darius is defeated by the Athenians in the battle of Marathon.

480 BC — The 2nd Persian war, the Persian army led by Xerxes is defeated in the Bay of Salamis by the Athenian forces.

469 BC — Birth of Socrates.

461 BC — Pericles rises to prominence as a leading statesman of Athens.

463 BC — Cimon, leader of the oligarchs, is ostracized. Ephialtes, leader of the Democratic Party is assassinated.
Pericles replaces him and becomes Commander-

in-chief of Athens.

449 BC — Acropolis is rebuilt and construction of the Parthenon begins.

445 BC — Aristophanes is born. "Thirty Year Peace" is signed between Sparta and Athens.

432 BC — Socrates participates in the battle of Potidaea in which he saves the life of Alcibiades, a former student who would later become known for his deceit and treason.

431 BC — Peloponnesian War begins between Sparta and Athens. Socrates serves as a hoplite (a heavy infantryman armed with a shield, a spear, and a sword), winning praise for his bravery.

430 BC — A terrifying plague begins in Athens that lasts for about four years and kills over one-third of the population of Athens.
Trial of Pericles takes place. He is blamed for the war and its resulting misery and is deposed.

429 BC — Pericles is reinstated, but soon dies from the plague. The political structure of Athens is in ruin. The plague seems also to have had a devastating effect on morals. Cleon becomes leader of the Democratic Party.

427 BC — Birth of Plato.

423 BC — Aristophanes's play *Clouds,* satirizing Socrates, is performed for the first time.

421 BC — Peace of Nicias is signed between Sparta and Athens proposing fifty years of peace.

420 BC — Alcibiades is named commander-in-chief.

416 BC — Athenian forces attack the island of Melos. Athenian forces kill all the men, enslave the women and children, and open the island to settlement by Athenians.

415 BC — Alcibiades leads an expedition to subjugate Sicily. When he is recalled to Athens to stand trial for the mutilation of the statues of Hermes,

A bronze statue representing a hoplite (a hoplite was a foot soldier armed with a shield, a helmet and a spear)

he escapes to Sparta and proposes to help them defeat Athens.

414 BC — The Sicilian expedition of Athens ends in disaster, with the attacking Athenian fleet destroyed.

Aristophanes's play *Birds* is performed for the first time. In the play, Aristophanes refers to pro-Spartan youth as "socratified."

413 BC — Sparta, supported by Persia, declares war on Athens. Sparta claims the Athenians had repeatedly violated the Peace of Nicias.

411 BC — Alcibiades overthrows democracy in Athens and the dictatorship of the Four Hundred takes over.

410 BC — After four months in power, the dictatorship of the Four Hundred is deposed and replaced with a democratic regime: the Council of Five Thousand.

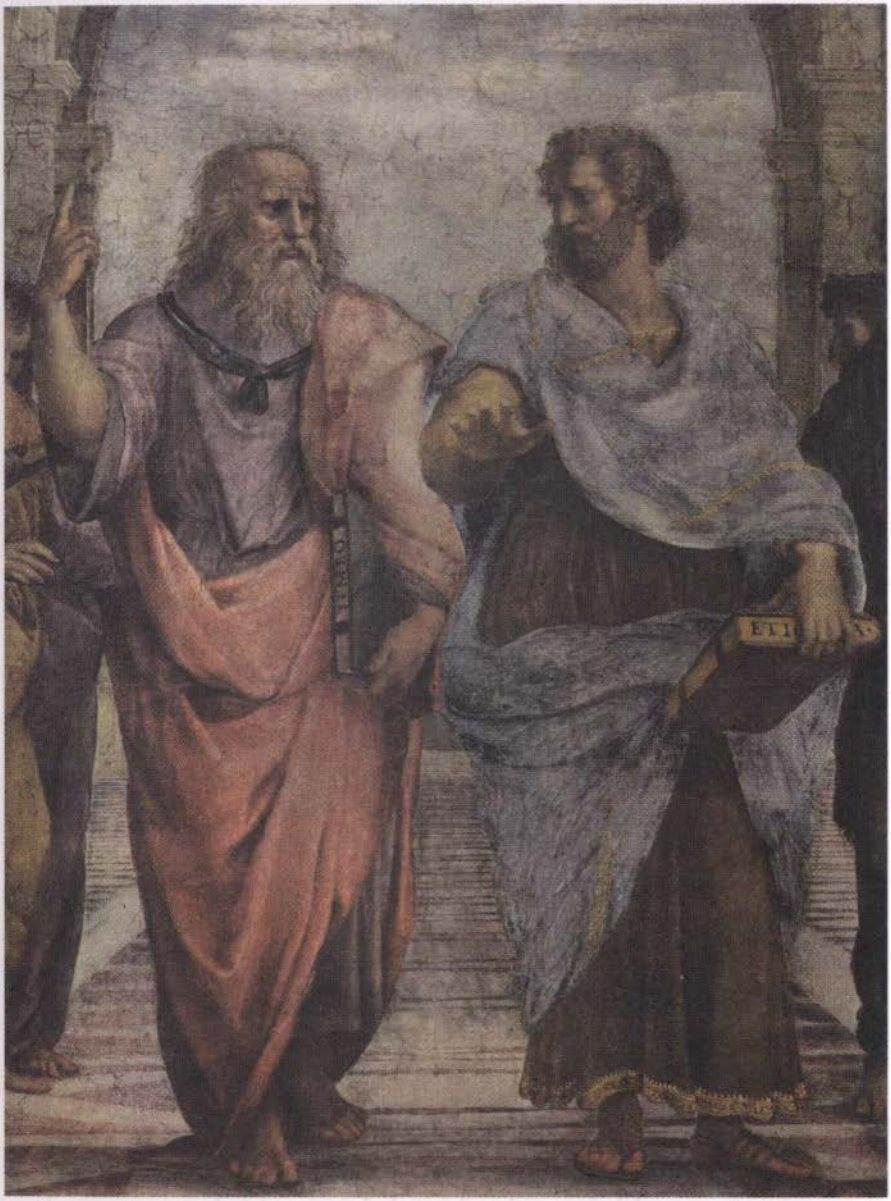
406 BC — The newly rebuilt Athenian fleet defeats Spartan forces off the island of Lesbos, but the crews of twenty five ships drown in a storm. Athenians prosecute and condemn to death the generals thought responsible for the disaster in a single trial.

Socrates alone opposes the decision to put the convicted generals to death as he considered it unconstitutional, but they are executed anyway.

Alcibiades is exiled.

404 BC — Athens falls to Sparta; the harsh, oligarchic Rule of the Thirty Tyrants led by Critias, a former pupil of Socrates, is imposed.

Socrates and four others are ordered to arrest Leon of Salamis, a democrat so that his property could be seized and he could be executed. Socrates refuses to collaborate with the Oligarchs. Leon is arrested and put to death.



The School of Athens (detail): Plato and Aristotle,
fresco by Raphael (1483-1520), Rome

403 BC — Democracy is restored in a violent overthrow of the Rule of the Thirty.
The Amnesty of Eucleides is passed completely revising Athenian law and pardoning all prior offenses. All legal accusations would now be based on newly codified law.

399 BC — Socrates is charged with "corrupting the youth of Athens" and "impiety".
He is convicted on a 280-220 by a 500-person jury of freemen, and then sentenced to death by hemlock poisoning by a larger margin.

386 BC — Establishment of Plato's School 'Academy'

367 BC — Aristotle, at age 17, enters Plato's Academy and becomes his most illustrious student.

347 BC — Death of Plato.

345 BC — The earliest recorded non-Platonic and non-Xenophonic reference to the trial of Socrates is made by Aeschines, an Athenian statesman and orator, in a prosecution. In it, he says to the jury "....put Socrates, the sophist, to death...because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty who put down democracy."

529 AD — Emperor Justinian closes the Platonic academy and other schools of philosophy in Athens, ending a twelve hundred year period of relatively free thought.

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Appendix IV

Famous Quotations from Socrates

The unexamined life is not worth living.

All men's souls are immortal, but the souls of the righteous are immortal and divine.

I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance.

I know that I am intelligent, because I know that I know nothing.

I am the wisest man alive; for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing.

True knowledge exists in knowing that you know nothing.

A life unexamined is unworthy of a man.

As for me, all I know is that I know nothing.

True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us.

Not life, but good life, is to be chiefly valued.

The end of life is to be like God, and the soul following God will be like Him.

Death may be the greatest of all human blessings.

I must first know myself, as the Delphic inscription says; to be curious about things not my concern while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be absurd.

Virtue is knowledge, and the man who knows the right will act rightly.

He is richest who is content with the least, for content is the wealth of nature.

An honest man is always a child.

Be as you wish to seem.

The greatest way to live with honour in this world is to be what we pretend to be.

Top: The Acropolis at Athens. Every city had an acropolis, or citadel. Destroyed by the Persians, the Athenian Acropolis was rebuilt in the late 5th century BC.

Right : Athena. This Roman version is the only evidence we have of the sumptuous appearance of the gold and ivory image of Athena made by Phidias for the Parthenon.

These supporting pillars in female form, the Caryatids, form part of the Erechtheum, a small temple on the Acropolis (see photo pp. 136-37).

"Our city is education
for all Hellas."
(Pericles)

The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavour to be what you desire to appear.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is a habit.

Wisdom begins in wonder.

It is not living that matters, but living rightly.

Let him that would move the world, first move himself.

Beware the barrenness of a busy life.

False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil.

I was afraid that by observing objects with my eyes and trying to comprehend them with each of my other senses I might blind my soul altogether.

I only wish that ordinary people had an unlimited capacity for doing harm; then they might have an unlimited power for doing good.

He is a man of courage who does not run away, but remains at his post and fights against the enemy.

If thou continuest to take delight in idle argumentation thou mayest be qualified to combat with the sophists, but will never know how to live with men.

Our prayers should be for blessings in general, for God knows best what is good for us.

He is richest who is content with the least.

He who is not content with what he has would not be content with what he would like to have.

You seem to think that happiness consists of luxury and extravagance; but I think that to want nothing is to resemble the gods, and to want as little as possible is to make the nearest approach to the gods.

A system of morality, which is based on relative emotional values, is a mere illusion, a thoroughly vulgar conception, which has nothing sound in it and nothing true.

As to marriage or celibacy, let a man take which course he will, he will be sure to repent.

Be slow to fall into friendship; but when thou art in, continue firm and constant.

Beauty is a short-lived tyranny.

By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher and that is a good thing for any man.

Children nowadays are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food and tyrannise their teachers.

Employ your time in improving yourself by other men's writings, so that you shall gain easily what others have laboured hard for.

From the deepest desires often comes the deadliest hate.

I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled poets to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean.

The poets are only the interpreters of the Gods.

I was really too honest a man to be a politician and live.

If a man is proud of his wealth, he should not be praised until it is known how he employs it.

If all misfortunes were laid in one common heap whence everyone must take an equal portion, most people would

be contented to take their own and depart.

One who is injured ought not to return the injury, for on no account can it be right to do an injustice; and it is not right to return an injury, or to do evil to any man, however much we have suffered from him.

Ordinary people seem not to realize that those who really apply themselves in the right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing themselves for dying and death.

Where there is reverence there is fear, but there is not reverence everywhere that there is fear, because fear presumably has a wider extension than reverence.

Worthless people live only to eat and drink; people of worth eat and drink only to live.

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The life of Socrates has been seen as a source of inspiration for seekers of Truth and of the courage that is required to apply Truth in life to its logical conclusion. The most distinguished disciple of Socrates, Plato, has immortalized the life and work of Socrates through various dialogues that he wrote to expound his philosophy which is considered to be one of the highest peaks of rational thought. Three dialogues of Plato are devoted to the last days of Socrates, in which the noble and sublime character of Socrates comes out vividly before us. These three dialogues are *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*. They bring out the heroism of Socrates, his total dedication to the search for the Truth and his tireless enthusiasm to discourse on Truth right upto the last moment of his life.

A study of the life of Socrates provides an opportunity to come into close contact with an important epoch of the history of Greek civilization, namely, the Age of Pericles which was itself an important chapter in the Golden Age that extended from 500 BC to 300 BC. It may be said that the blend of mysticism and rationalism that we find in the life of Socrates, greatly moulded the philosophical thought of Plato. Socrates' major contribution to the world of philosophy has been his tireless effort to insist on enquiry free from dogma, and conducive to a rational approach through a method that aimed at consistency and comprehensiveness. No wonder, then, that he is considered to be the father of Western philosophy.

In presenting, therefore, the life of Socrates in this monograph, mainly through the *Apology* and *Phaedo* and partly also through the story contained in *Crito*, it is felt that students will be led to examine the meaning of life and will be led to explore at a deeper level the famous doctrine of Socrates: "Virtue is knowledge".